

# **The Norwegian Labour Party and the Welfare State: changing attitudes towards the market**

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**Written in the spring, summer, autumn and winter of  
2004**

## **Summary**

I was interested in doing research into attitudes, norms and values within the Norwegian Labour Party concerning “competitive tendering” (“konkurranseutsetting”), and privatisation of welfare institutions.

This because I wanted to uncover perceptions of change and stability as concerning key elements of the welfare state, and the types of, mainly grassroots, responses to possible changes produced in terms of their effect upon traditionally held norms and values. I chose the Labour Party because this is the main political party which has been seen as responsible for the development and protection of welfare institutions.

I chose to do library research, and to interview members of the party. Both my interviews and my library research proved very revealing.

The “rank and file,” or “grassroots” members of the party whom I interviewed felt that the Labour Party represents, or should represent, a very strong sense of community and solidarity amongst the less well off, and less privileged sections of society. They often show real anger over privatisation and “competitive tendering,” or “konkurranseutsetting,” which is seen to be undermining the very fabric of their communities, and the local spirit of solidarity.

Labour Party documents, on the other hand, show that the party leadership have often been more sympathetic towards privatisation and the role of the market in the public sector (though they have now, perhaps, changed their minds). Their attitudes have, at the least, largely displayed indifference, until quite recently.

My library research showed that these conclusions support other research in the field, most notably that of Christensen and Læg Reid, and Bowles and Gintis.

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## 1. Introduction

In this chapter I begin with a presentation of the background for my choice of research topic. I then, briefly, explain the concepts of analysis employed in the research and my formulation of the research problem.

### 1.1 Background

**“Hvis levestandarden skal økes i takt med produksjons- kapasiteten forutsettes at det felles forbruket øker hurtigere enn det rent private forbruket. Når menneskene får dekket behovet for fødevarer, klær og husly oppstår det et stadig behov for goder som ikke lar seg frambringe ved privat produksjon. Det er goder som må stå til rådighet for alle dersom de skal stå til rådighet for noen i det hele tatt. Disse godene må derfor betales av samfunnet som helhet. Slike goder er gater og veier, helsevesen, skoler og universiteter, naturvern og kloakkanlegg....Det paradoksale er imidlertid at selv ansvarlige borgerlige politikere krever en kraftig økning av fellesforbruket samtidig som den offentlige sektor ønskes redusert. Dette manglende perspektiv på enkle velferdsøkonomiske sammenhenger er det irrasjonelle grunnlaget for selve det privatkapitalistiske system.”**

**(Fritt Forum. Arbeiderbevegelsens Studentforbund. 1965:63)**

The "Scandinavian model of socialism" was seen by many in the west to be a real, and long- lasting alternative to both free- market capitalism and East European, or Soviet "communism." The Scandinavian socialist, or Social Democratic, parties were seen to have ushered in an era of some form of “mixed economy” based on an ever growing public sector and increasing public control of industry, this combined with Keynesian economic policies whereby the state directly controlled large sections of the economy (Mjøset. 1991. Rokkan, Dahl 1966). Stable growth in peoples living standards and rising levels of “social security” (growth of the welfare state) were also made possible by the fact that western capitalism had now entered the period of “the long boom.” A period of almost three decades of stable, and constant, economic growth. It was now that the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes achieved widespread hegemony (Munthe 1987). “Demand management” by the state became the central political economic policy based on Keynes theories on wages and unemployment.

The Scandinavian Labour parties were seen to be "parties of the people:" democratically elected representatives of the people, many of them (at least in Norway) themselves originally coming from the traditional, or industrial, working class, were to administer the public (and to some extent the private) sector of the economy to the

benefit of the general public (not least the less well off sections of the general public). The funds for these public services were largely to be made available through progressive taxation. Positive results were seen in terms of stable growth in the economy, a large increase in female participation in the workforce combined with a massive growth in publicly owned childcare facilities, a rising standard of living, and huge increases in worker protection rights and welfare benefits.

The historian Berge Furre writes of the Norwegian Labour Party in the 1950s:

**“Solidaritet, samhold og partidisiplin var honnørord i miljøet... Bak seg hadde regjeringa den mektigaste folkerørsla i landet... Styrken i organisasjonen kom særleg fram når det stunda til val og eit par hundre tusen partimedlemmer og fagorganiserte vart mobiliserte til agitasjon på dørene, på arbeidsplassene, på møta i friluft og Folkets hus”(Furre 1996:268).**

Norman Ginsburg writes of Sweden:

**“Policy formation by the Social Democrats since the 1930s has been shaped by two broad influences- populism and socialism. Populism entails seeking a popular mandate, a broad appeal within the electorate...Socialism involves the development of economic democracy, political accountability, social equality and the advancement of working class interests.” (Ginsburg 1992:31).**

Finn Olstad writes of how “the people” didn’t want to go back to the days of the crisis prone 1920s, 30s, and 40s with mass unemployment, homelessness, dire poverty, the growth of fascism, world war, the Holocaust and so on. Olstad writes of Norway:

**“Massearbeidsløsheten ble permanent. Ledighetstallene varierte, men langtids-tendensene var stigende fram til 1933. Nye topper ble nådd. I 1927 var opptil 30% av fagforenings-medlemmene arbeidsledige, ved årskiftet 1932/33 40%. Mellom høsten 1925 og annen verdenskrig kom tallet aldri under 10%”**

and the reasons why: **“Krisen ble opplevd som kapitalismens krise, og langt på vei var den det. Naturligvis var den et produkt av flere faktorer. Befolkningsveksten spilte med, likedan politiske forhold, som pengepolitikk og proteksjonisme ....Dessuten hadde tradisjonelle industrigrener nådd et visst metningspunkt....Ingen behøvde likevel å være i tvil om at kapitalistisk markedsøkonomi og produksjon spilte en avgjørende rolle. De brå krisene og den uforutsigbare utviklingen demonstrerte med ubehagelig tydelighet markedsøkonomiens virkninger” (Olstad1991: 83, 84).**

Thus began an experiment in social engineering that was based on a wide social and political consensus around regaining social control of markets and using this control in order to guarantee everybody a rising standard of living and a decent level of care in the community.

Furthermore, this social experiment would also seem to have taken us back to a more traditional way of life, also based on social control of markets and social

solidarity, as in previous historical epochs. A traditional way of life based, not least of all, upon **“norms of reciprocity and conditional obligation to others”** (Bowles and Gintis 2000: 33), and social values which showed an appreciation of collective human dignity. The renowned historian E.J. Hobsbawm writes of how, in the England of the 1750s, (the birthplace of “the free market”) with the advent of the factory system, and the “protestant work ethic”: **“industrial labour - and especially mechanized factory labour - imposes a regularity, routine and monotony quite unlike pre-industrial rhythms of work, which depend on the variation of the seasons or the weather, the multiplicity of tasks in occupations unaffected by the rational division of labour, the vagaries of other human beings or animals, or even a man`s own desire to play instead of working....pre-industrial experience, tradition, wisdom and morality provided no adequate guide for the kind of behaviour which a capitalist economy required..... This conflict between the “moral economy” of the past and the economic rationality of the capitalist present was particularly clear in the realm of social security. The traditional view, which still survived in a distorted way in all classes of rural society and in the internal relations of working-class groups, was that a man had a right to earn a living, and if unable to do so, a right to be kept alive by his community”**(Hobsbawm 1968: 85, 87,88).

This is in line with the classic analysis by Polanyi (1944) of what he called “the Great Transformation” and his predictions concerning the development of western capitalism after the second World War. Polanyi analyzed **“the market economy`s growth and fall”** (Mjøset 1991: 62). Polanyi describes liberal ideology, and the liberal project of the 19th century, with the introduction of the “self regulating free market” as the dominant force in society (both economically, and socially) as “a wild utopia.” This wild utopia threatens the very “substance of society,” and produces reactions amongst its members whereby institutions arise in order to protect people and property against the ravages of this “extremely artificial system” (Mjøset 1999: 63). Polanyi points out that, historically speaking, market forces had always been embedded in political and social institutions which had limited their influence: the medieval guild system is one example, with its price control, and social control over supply and demand. The liberal idea that the “self regulating free market” would spontaneously become the dominant political, economic, and social force in society as a natural consequence of human transaction was, for Polanyi, a complete fallacy. He goes on to analyse just how and why such an artificial social system was implemented during the English industrial revolution.

Capitalist interests behind the new “factory system” were concerned with attempting to turn both land, labour and money into commodities available for sale and exchange on the open market, thereby maximizing profits. The problem for Polanyi was the simple fact that neither land, labour or money are commodities by nature: describing

them as commodities was a "fiction" which liberalism tried to turn into a dangerous reality: **"Men intet samfunn er, selv ikke over kortere tidsrom, i stand til å tåle vrkningene av et slikt system av grove fiksjoner uten at dette samfunnets menneskelige og naturlige substans, såvel som dets næringsliv blir beskyttet fra de herjinger denne sataniske kvern forårsaker"** (Mjøset 1999: 64).

The commodification of labour is reflected in the Poor Law of 1832. For the first time the term "unemployed" is introduced: **"folk som er uten støtte fra noen sosialpolitikk, og som må akseptere markedslønnen med "trusselen om å sulte ihjel" som eneste alternativ"** (Mjøset 1999: 64). There was a collective reaction from the working class against this commodification: the labour movement was born through the struggle for factory laws, unemployment benefits, the right to organize trade unions, wage increases, political representation and the franchise. Hobsbawm writes of the commodification of the land: **"The inhuman economics of commercial and "advanced" farming strangled the human values of a social order"** (Hobsbawm 1968: 105). Protectionist policies were later developed in most countries in order to preserve agriculture from total collapse. Also financial institutions felt the need to protect themselves from the competitive chaos produced by the "self regulating free market:" **"Den engelske sentralbanken måtte gripe inn for å forhindre massekonkurser og ødeleggelse av kapital"** (Mjøset 1999: 65). What was, indeed, spontaneous was precisely these collective reactions against the free market with the growth of centralised institutions of control designed to protect "land, labour and money."

With great insight Polanyi predicted that after the second world war (itself largely a product of the extremely competitive free market economy) economic planning would once again become the norm, based on principles of wealth redistribution. That market forces would once again be regulated: the price of labour power (wages) being largely decided through a balance of power between the state and the trade unions. That the agricultural sector would be protected by customs duties, and that the state would control the flow of money.

## **Marxism**

The Marxist tradition, to which the Norwegian Labour Party originally belonged, or was at least strongly influenced by, would base its analysis on theories of class exploitation. The Marxist view of the state, also the welfare state, is that it is based on a consensus reached through a particular balance of class forces (Atkinson, Stiglitz 1980) and that the class struggle, attempting to tip this balance further in favour of one or another particular class, will continue within this framework. The modern day capitalist state is seen to be largely shaped by a dichotomous, and antagonistic, relationship based upon the opposing interests of the two major classes: the working class and the

capitalist class. The welfare state is seen as the “partial attainment of socialism” within the capitalist state, representing the interests of the organized working class: **“the expansion of social security, public housing, public education etc”** (Atkinson, Stiglitz 1980: 320). At the same time, it is argued that the growth of the welfare state was in the capitalist interest as it contributed to the reproduction of, and the education of, labour power at a time of economic growth, technological innovation and expansion (and contributed therefore also to the reproduction of capital). However, at times of economic crisis, or stagnation, it may be in the interests of capital to cut back on public expenditure and reduce the scope of welfare provided. This will be in direct contrast to “the interests of labour” and may lead to protest and ultimately revolt.

Marxists do in fact argue that the world economy entered into economic crisis and “persistent stagnation” from 1973 onwards (Brenner 2002:7) and that, as a result, right wing economic policies experienced a revival. A crisis of overproduction, it is claimed, led to **“a sharp fall in manufacturing profit rates”** and the introduction of an **“epochal shift from long expansion to long stagnation for the world economy.”** (Brenner. 2002:26). Marxists also argue that partly as a consequence of this shift in the world economy, right wing economic policies, which later were to become known as “neo-liberalism” began with Margaret Thatcher in the Great Britain of the 1980s` and Ronald Reagan in the USA (Brenner. 2002:35).

An additional feature of Marxism is its theory of ideology. Marx and Engels write the following at the beginning of the “Manifesto of the Communist Party:” **“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles...patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman...in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, *carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight....*The modern bourgeois society...has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression”** (my italics).

I believe that what Marx and Engels were referring to as “an uninterrupted now hidden, now open fight” is (amongst other things) the fact that the class struggle is not only conducted in an explicit way on the economic level, with strikes, lockouts, wage negotiations and so on, or on a political level (workers parties against bourgeois parties), but also on an ideological level, where it is not always made explicit that class interests are at stake: **“An important additional feature of groups stressed by Marx is their *ideology* - their distinctive interpretation of reality which is not only likely to be highly partial, but also highly apologetic for the existence, interests, and/or activities of the group. Among other things, this ideology is likely to portray the groups own, partial interpretation as nearly universal and impartial”** (Archibald 1989. 134). De Ste. Croix also makes the same point in his landmark study of ancient Greece and Rome: **“I also regard as an important form of class struggle the**

**propaganda, whether sincere or tongue-in-cheek, which masters (or any exploiting class) may use to persuade slaves (or any exploited class) to accept their position without protest, even perhaps as being “in their own best interests”: the doctrine of “natural slavery” is only the most extreme example of this” De Ste. Croix 1981: 66).**

Marxists would see neoliberalism as largely a product of ruling class ideology, where the partial, and somewhat biased view of the international capitalist class is presented as universal truth. In light of such an analysis neoliberal economic theories can be seen as ideology constructed on behalf of the international capitalist class in order to further their own class interests: maximum profits and maximum exploitation of the working class of the world. In the national Norwegian newspaper “Dagbladet” (Friday 23. January. 2004: 14) the billionaire Stein Erik Hagen, owner of one of the largest supermarket chains in Norway (with some of the lowest wages, and some of the worst working conditions in the country) and one of the richest men in the world, said the following: **“Vi er så fornøyde, i Norge og i Europa, men det vil skje store forandringer. Vi har de høyeste lønningene, og hvor mye jobber vi i forhold til i USA og Østen. I USA jobber de 2000 timer i året, i Det fjerne østen 2200 timer, mens vi i Europa jobber 1500-1600 timer...Vi har mye ferie og de beste pensjons og trygdeordningene. Europa er i ferd med å seile litt akterut.”** These comments came after Hagen had participated, along with top bosses and politicians from all over the world, in The World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland.

Pierre Bourdieu also writes of how he sees both globalisation and neoliberalism largely in terms of a bitter class struggle where capitalist ideology is used in order to attack the gains made by the welfare state and to squeeze more profits out of the workers: **“T’ve used the word “globalisation.” It is a myth in the strong sense of the word, a powerful discourse...an idea which has social force, which obtains belief. it is the main weapon in the battles against the welfare state. European workers, we are told, must compete with the least favoured workers of the rest of the world. The workers of Europe are thus offered as a model countries which have no minimum wage, where factory workers work twelve hours a day for a wage which is between a quarter and a fifth of European wages, where there are no trade unions, where there is child labour, and so on...In a general way neoliberalism is a very smart and very modern repackaging of the oldest ideas of the oldest capitalists...in other words the return to a kind of radical capitalism with no other law than that of maximum profit” (Bourdieu 1998: 34, 35).**

As the Norwegian Labour Party (or “Workers Party” as it is called in Norwegian) is a typical example of what Lenin called a “capitalist workers party” (Cliff, Gluckstein 1996: 2), trying to mediate between the interests of both labour and capital, I presume it will be influenced by both working class and capitalist “ideology.”



In such a political, and ideological, environment of aggressive right wing policies on behalf of the capitalist class it becomes, perhaps, difficult for Social Democracy to continue with the same degree of “class compromise” (Mjøset 1991) as before, and still maintain legitimacy in the eyes of traditional voters, members and supporters.

## **1.2 Challenges to the social democratic project**

**“Det hele handler om hva slags samfunnsmodell vi ønsker i framtiden....Hvis man ønsker et solidarisk samfunn, krever det at sosiale normer om anstendige forskjeller holdes i hevd. Det nordiske velferdssamfunnets ideal om begrensede forskjeller og solidarisk vilje til omfordeling, er verdier som ikke kommer av seg selv, men som må vernes om og kjempes for” (Knud Knudsen: tidskriftet “Velferd” utgave 8-2004: 6).**

### **Internal developments in the welfare state**

At the same time, the cost of maintaining the welfare state is on the increase: the number of people receiving some form of state benefit such as unemployment or sickness benefits has risen (at least in Norway), professor Jørn Rattsø writes of Norway that over 700, 000 people of working age are living on public benefits (“Dagbladet.” 01. 07. 04: 7). Also, as Esping-Andersen (amongst others) points out, the elderly population of many of the advanced industrialised countries is steadily rising (Esping-Andersen. 1999). Average life expectancy has increased. This poses problems in terms of the workforce being able to maintain levels of productivity enabling them to sustain increasing levels of welfare benefits to a growing number of pensioners: the size of the workforce is shrinking, in relative terms, compared to the number of pensioners:

**“the long-term welfare state consequences of population ageing give a new urgency to nations` fertility performance....In the 1960s, the average European pension scheme appeared viable because mean fertility rates stood at 2.6 Pension expenditures will roughly double in real terms by 2040 across the OECD. The burden of upholding existing guarantees will be extraordinarily heavy if the average European fertility rate remains, as now, at 1.5.” (Esping-Andersen. 1999:67, 68).**

Kuhnle and Solheim write of Norway:

**“Det absolutte antall pensjonister vil ventelig vokse moderat frem til 2010, for så å vokse rakst de neste 30 årene..... I dag er hver 5. nordmann pensjonist, i 2050 vil hver 4. nordmann være pensjonist... ..Pensjonistsutgiftene har økt kraftig i de seinere år, og vil fortsetter å øke. Utgiftene økte med mer enn 72% fra 1972 til 1982 i faste priser, og er forventet å øke med ytterligere 72% til 2025; det vil si fra**

omtrent 7,3% av BNP i 1984 til 13% i 2025. Disse estimatene er basert på fremskrivninger av antallet pensjonister og på virkningen av den inntektsrelaterte tilleggpensjonen dersom alle andre faktorer holdes konstant (for eksempel 0-vekst i BNP i faste priser) (Hatland 1984)” (Kuhnle, Solheim. 1991: 212, 213).

Such developments have recently provoked a certain amount of public debate, also in Norway, as to whether we have the economic resources both to maintain current levels of welfare expenditure, and to look after an ever growing number of pensioners. The present leader of the Norwegian Labour Party, Jens Stoltenberg, has recently been quoted as saying that due to demographic developments also in Norway, we need to reform our pensions system along the same lines as in other countries. At the same time the chief economist of the main trade union federation (“LO”) has stated the view that those who claim that we need such a reform are simply engaged in right wing “propaganda” as part of a general “right wing ideological offensive.” A leading Labour Party politician (“APs trygdepolitiske talskvinne på Stortinget”) Britt Hildeng also claimed that proposed reforms **“bryter med verdier som til nå har vært fundamentet i folketrygden og velferdsstaten”** (“Klassekampen” 08.09.04).

What may be described as the ethical foundations of the welfare state are perceived to be threatened. Values stating that everybody has a right to care in the community (“Pleie og omsorg”) are contrasted with rational economic cost/ benefit analysis. At the same time, the Norwegian Labour Party seems to be experiencing a certain amount of disagreement over these issues within their own ranks.

### Neo-liberal economics

From about 1973 onwards there was a general consensus that economic growth which fueled “the post-war boom” was slowing down.

“Laissez-Faire” (“la det skje”) economics experienced a revival. In the USA, neoliberals launched a political counter-offensive against the gains made in the name of the welfare state: **“Robert Solow.....med nobelprisen i sosialøkonomi fra 1987.....**  
**...sier...klart at det Reagan administrasjonen er opptatt av er.....og alltid har vært:**  
**“....omfordeling av rikdom i favør av de rike og makt i favør av de mektige”**  
(Lysestøl and Eilertsen 2001: 20). At the same time as the Reagan administration launched its offensive in the USA, in the 1980s, the Thatcher government in Britain was engaged in the so-called “Thatcher revolution” (German 1990: 3). In both cases the ideology invoked was strongly opposed to the power of the state, the old Labour Parties, and the trade unions: **““We should not expect the state to appear in the guise of an extravagant good fairy at every christening, a loquacious companion at every stage of life’s journey, the unknown mourner at every funeral.” Margaret Thatcher, March 1980”**” (German 1990: 15). “Ideological” perspectives were developed and used in order to explain, amongst other things, restructuring and

downsizing of the welfare state. Burawoy calls them: **“neoliberal discourses of need” (Burawoy 2000: 342)**. These perspectives were able to gradually gain more and more hegemony due to the growth in popularity, power and influence of the parties of the right.

Neoliberalism, based on neo-classical economics, assumes that economic agents, both individual and collective, will act in a completely rational manner in order to further their own self-interests. The collective (or global) net result of the economic activities of these “rational actors” will be an extremely rational, and effective economic system based on the maximization of self-interest (and profit).

This collective economic system based on self-interest will, however, in turn, be experienced by individual economic actors as a forced rationality: it becomes, for example, extremely difficult for individual governments to go “against the current” by making “irrational” decisions, such as spending too much money on “unproductive” welfare.

In light of these theories “globalisation” is seen as an inevitable consequence of a pragmatic need to boost the world economy: **“Deregulation, privatisation and trade liberalisation, however, were not invented by ultra-liberal ideologists.....the biggest reformists, entitling us to talk in terms of a globalisation of capitalism, were communists in China and the Soviet Union, protectionists in Latin America, and nationalists in Asia. In many other countries- Sweden, for example- the progress has been spurred by Social Democrats. In short.....it is pragmatic, often anti-liberal, politicians being of the opinion that their governments have gone too far in the direction of control-freakery, have for this very reason begun liberalising their economies...we today probably have the biggest public sectors and the heaviest pressures of taxation the world has ever known. The liberalisation measures introduced have been concerned with abolishing a number of centralist excesses occurring previously, not with introducing a system of laissez-faire” (Norberg 2001: 14).**

Simply then a case of sensible (“rational”) decision making in a world based on economic competition. Deregulation of the economy has been necessary in order to boost economic growth worldwide: control of financial markets, labour markets, and too much spending on public welfare had led to stagnation.

Rational “globalisation,” in turn, creates its own dynamic, leading always to a further need for “restructuring of labour markets”, “downsizing” of units of production, “outsourcing,” privatisation, “competitive tendering” and so on, in every country on the planet; witness the recent contribution to the debate by conservative spokesperson Erna Solberg: **“Norge er en del av en global verden, enten vi liker det eller ikke.....Dersom vi skal konkurrere, kan vi ikke ha et skattenivå som er vesentlig forskjellig fra det våre konkurrenter har....Vår fremtidige velferd avhenger av at**

**vi klarer å skape verdier som skal finansiere vårt velferdssystem...Vår utfordring ligger i å møte globaliseringen på en offensiv måte. Det krever et fokus på kompetanseutvikling, på rammevilkår for næringslivet og velferdsordninger som stimulerer til arbeid. Dette er avgjørende for at vårt velferdssystem skal overleve for fremtiden.” (Dagens Næringsliv 7/12 april 2004: 3).**

According to the tenets of neoliberalism economic stagnation has to be countered by deregulation of inflexible labour markets in order to boost the economy, and public spending has to be cut in order to ease strains on the national budget and avoid inflation. According to this analysis western nations simply no longer have the long- term rates of economic growth necessary to maintain previous levels of trade union rights and worker benefits, and likewise, we no longer have the necessary productive capacity to maintain previous levels of welfare spending. Trade unions, and to some extent, Social Democratic parties, are usually seen as hindering economic development with their conservative attitudes towards established workers rights and welfare benefits: **“Europe’s economic model could once be defended as a justifiable political choice. People could select their flavor of prosperity. America’s flavor- more competition and insecurity- wasn’t for everyone. Europe could pick less anxiety and more vacations. It could sacrifice some economic growth for a bigger welfare state (more jobless benefits, universal health care). This argument no longer works.**

**Why not? Well, the economy is so enfeebled by high taxes and restrictive regulations that it can’t pay for all the benefits...what the Europeans (and everyone else, too) really need is faster growth within Europe, which would reduce joblessness and bolster global trade...unless they take modestly unpopular steps today, they will be faced with hugely unpopular consequences tomorrow” (Samuelson, R.J. Newsweek. February 9th. 2004).**

In light of such analysis Social Democratic Third Way politics, or similar attitudes as expressed by Norwegian Social Democracy, would possibly be seen as pragmatic attempts to “bow to the inevitable:” the need for restructuring and “modernisation” in the face of a globalized economy experiencing low rates of economic growth, and needing to boost its productive capacity in order to cope with, amongst other things, the welfare needs of the future.

### **The British example**

In Britain under Thatcher, and successive Tory governments, public spending was cut drastically. For example, between 1979-1980 and 1989-1990 public spending as proportion of GDP fell from 43% to 39% (German 1990: 16). Privatisation of state owned companies such as British Telecom, British Gas, British Steel and the British Airports Authority was also one of the main aims of the “Thatcher Revolution”

(German 1990: 15). This alongside attacks on trade union rights, the sale of council housing (kommunale bolig), and cutbacks in public funding to such institutions as schools, hospitals, transport services, and local government services (German 1990: 15).

A major element of such neoliberal policies has been “outsourcing” and competitive tendering of services in the public sector. Polly Toynbee, an investigative journalist, has recently spent time as a low paid casual worker in Britain. She writes of how a myriad number of private “employment agencies” have sprung up in recent years in order to exploit the large numbers of unemployed, immigrants and refugees. These agencies have, to a large extent, replaced the services previously provided by state run “job centres.” The new agencies are out to make a profit on the people they find work for: workers are employed by the agency and “contracted out” to different institutions. The National Health Service (NHS) is one such institution: **“I had plenty of time to study the small print of the forms I was about to sign, though the print is so small and dense I doubt many other applicants bother. The terms exposed in these tiny words explain why the NHS is using casual workers employed by agencies at pay and conditions it would never itself dare to offer in public. The Casual Work Agreement is an “agreement to provide occasional services”, in other words a zero-hours contract. One clause automatically opted me out of the 48-hour maximum working week protection. “The temporary worker hereby agrees that the working week limit shall not apply.” No sign no job.”** (Toynbee 2003: 32, 33).

Another consequence of outsourcing, or contracting out, and competitive tendering, is that workers in low paid, low status, jobs no longer have any “job security.” They become casual workers, employed on a day to day basis. Also, real wages for such work have sunk somewhat in the last thirty years (Polly Toynbee worked for a while as a hospital porter, both recently, and, for a period, some thirty years ago):

**“My work was not only relatively lower paid than thirty years ago, it was also entirely insecure, day to day agency employment. Back then at least I had the security of joining the staff of the NHS from day one: it was a safe job for life if I wanted it, but now everything is shifting sands for the low paid. It is called “flexibility”, and in the name of “flexibility” the hospital had shed or “outsourced” all its ancillary workers. I was about to learn the full meaning of contracting out”** (Toynbee 2003: 56, 57).

Obviously, rights which apply to other European workers are not to apply here: extra profits are to be made by forcing people to work longer hours and not having to pay them for overtime, sickness or holidays. A new “underclass” consisting of cheap, casual labour is created. Fran Abrams, another investigative journalist who also spent time in such forms of employment, writes of her experiences working on the bottle line

in a pickle factory: **“Underclass: It’s true, there’s a deep divide between us and the permanent workers. Although they’re friendly enough they’re also conscious of their higher status, and I think some of the older ones regard us with a tinge of suspicion. After all, we’re paid less than they are. Once or twice, I hear people voicing their fear that Bramwells might take on more agency staff in order to get rid of permanent employees” (Abrams 2002: 96).**

This is an example of classic economic liberalism, with “free” and unfettered competition in an “open market” reducing the cost of labour power, and increasing the general level of profit. Such policies have, if anything, been on the increase since Tony Blair and “New Labour” came to office: **“Sir Keith Joseph’s income subsidy was founded on a very Tory idea. Now followed by Labour, the idea is to let the labour market take more or less its own course, allowing employers to pay sub-survivable wages to workers with the state coming in as a back-stop with a top-up subsidy”**

**(Toynbee 2003: 235).** In other words, the state is to use taxpayers money in order to indirectly subsidize businessmen who pay their workers near starvation wages. Callinicos also writes of how: **“According to the Department of Social Security, the number of people living in households on less than half the average income (the official definition of poverty) rose during the Blair government’s first two years in office from 16.9 to 17.7 per cent of the population. The richest 10 per cent of the population saw their income rise by 7.1 per cent, compared to only 1.9 per cent for that of the poorest 10 per cent....A study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and using a different definition of poverty found that 14.5 million people - 26 per cent of the UK population - were living in poverty by the end of 1999.**

**The growth in poverty under New Labour is all the more striking since it took place at a time when the economy was growing relatively quickly” (Callinicos 2001: 52, 53).**

The “New Labour” government, and pioneers of the “Third Way” in Great Britain, would seem to have bowed completely to the “inevitability” of the free play of market forces.

## **Modernisation**

The British Labour Party had begun a process of renewal, or “modernisation,” leading to the formation of “New Labour” and “Third Way” politics. Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party and British prime Minister since 1997, seems to have quite consciously decided to follow in Margaret Thatchers footsteps as the following quote from his speech to “News International Management” in 1995 would seem to suggest: **“Until the moment she fell in 1990 Margaret Thatcher was regarded as “one of the most astute and powerful of contemporary political leaders.” Five years later Blair**

was still attempting to follow her by making “New Labour” “the true expression of the radical “anti establishment” spirit of the Reagan/Thatcher administrations”” (Cliff, Gluckstein 1996: 389):

Perhaps the main mastermind behind Third Way politics, Anthony Giddens, writes the following: **“With rights come responsibilities. We have to find ways of taking care of ourselves, because we can’t now rely on the big institutions to do so. Public policy has to shift from concentrating on the redistribution of wealth to promoting wealth creation. Rather than offering subsidies to business, govt. should foster conditions that lead firms to innovate and workers to become more efficient in the global economy.”** (Giddens. 2000:3).

Here again the emphasis is on a shift of values, away from “welfare dependancy” and toward a calculative, rational, need for a more effective economy. Public ownership was now seen as more of a burden and a liability than an effective way of controlling the market. The emphasis was now on the downplaying of the role of the state, in both public and economic affairs.

These sort of attitudes have become some of the “corner-stones” of Third Way politics which have, in turn, become quite influential throughout the European Social Democratic left. Critics, however, claim that the Third Way is not, as it claims, a set of policies for moving politics beyond left and right, but simply **“a rationalisation for political compromise between left and right, in which the left moves closer to the right.”** (Giddens. 2000:11).

### **Deregulation worldwide**

As Inger Marie Hagen, a researcher from the research organisation, “FAFO,” (and a co-author of the book “Makt og demokrati i arbeidslivet”) puts it: **“Privatisering og globalisering flytter makt fra regjeringer og folkevalgte organer til produsentforetak og internasjonale konserner....Eiernes revolusjon er slagordet som ofte brukes for å karakterisere 1980 og 90 årene.....Eierskap blir viktigere, administrasjonstyrte bedrifter er blitt en negativ karakteristikk og idealet går i retning av aktivt eierskap og økt vekt på aksjeeiernes utbytte på litt bedre norsk. Aktiviteten i aksjemarkedet har økt kraftig.....**

Noe annet er det jeg mener med “det naturlige og det selvsagte.” Det er selvsagt at markedsprinsippene skal styre, det er selvsagt at vi må forholde oss til internasjonale endringer og der er også selvsagt hvordan vi skal gjøre det. Politisk styring virker ikke - er en selvsagt og idag ikke særlig kontroversiell uttalelse..... staten er blitt trengt bakover av næringslivet i kampen om hegemoniet.... Fra kollektiv trygghet til individuell forhandlingsposisjon - eller fra kollektive bindinger til individuell frihet. Det samme utsagnet kan tolkes på svært forskjellig

**avhengig av politikk og ideologi. Her handler det altså om ideologiske valg om hvilken vei man skal gå.” (Tidsskriftet: “Samfunnsviteren,” nr. 6- 2003: 13, 14, 15).**

An ideological choice then, based on alternate sets of ethical values: collective care in the community based on a sense of collective responsibility, or unbridled individual freedom based on the rational pursuit of self interest (and profit).

In Norway too, again partly as a consequence of the growth in popularity and influence of the parties of the right, neoliberal policies have been on the increase. The sale of council housing (kommunale bolig), and cutbacks in public spending, including the funding of local government services, have long been the case in Oslo. Privatisation too has been on the increase. One of the leaders of the “Right” (“Høyre”) Party in Norway, the “modernisation minister” (“moderniseringsminister”) Morten Meyer was recently quoted as saying that he thinks the next general election (autumn next year) will have “privatisation” as a central theme. He was quoted as saying the following as guest speaker at a trade union conference (statements which provoked many of the delegates): **“Vi lever i individualismens tidsalder. Derfor er det avgjørende at vi er i stand til å utvikle velferdstjenester som passer moderne menneskers behov.....Hvordan kan vi skape en offentlig sektor som.....får mer.....ut av pengene, spurte han, og viste til følgende punkter for å modernisere Norge: Mer anbudskonkurranse for å skape bedre og billigere velferdstjenester. Større fokus på oppnådde resultater, i stedet for konsentrasjon om ressursbruk” (Dagsavisen, 25 november 2004: 8).**

One could claim that a second attempt at establishing “a wild utopia” (Polanyi 1944) is taking place in terms of a “neoliberal revolusjon” which is sweeping the globe and, once again, replacing social control of markets with ever more liberal trade agreements, the free flow of financial capital, reduction of welfare benefits, privatisation, outsourcing, and competitive tendering.

### **Future welfare**

The whole question of what sort of welfare western nation states are to have in the future, indeed, whether or not any form of traditional “welfare state” is to be maintained in the long term, seems to hang in the balance.

The Labour Party is still a major force in Norwegian politics. The attitudes this organisation adopts, or has adopted, towards the relationship between the free play of market forces and the role of the state, or local government in controlling, or even replacing, the market as a decisive economic agent, could have important long term effects on the structure, and role of the welfare state.

### **1.3 Research design**



I base my research design on three main aspects of enquiry: the role of symbolism in shaping peoples attitudes, the role of economic theory, and the role of political theory and ideology. In pursuing these three aspects of enquiry I hope to shed light upon perceived conceptions of stability and change as concerns the Norwegian Labour Party and its attitudes towards the free play of market forces within the welfare state.

In analysing the data I will lay special emphasis on how peoples attitudes are socially constructed with reference to, more or less given, conceptual frameworks which help to shape their perceived awareness of the world around them: I wish to **“theorize the world in terms of the impact of (objective) social structures upon (subjective) dispositions” (Silverman. 2001: 100).** This because I believe that certain conceptual frameworks (such as sets of interconnected visual and linguistic symbols, or ideological systems of belief) can become **“social facts”** (“objective social structures”) strongly influencing individuals attitudes and behaviour.

The people I chose to study were chosen because they were all long-standing members of the Labour party (from several different branches in Oslo). Most of them had been employed in, or, in their role as members of the Labour Party, had worked in connection with, places of work which had been either partially privatised, or subjected to competitive tendering (“konkurranseutsatt”). This part of my study was based on in-depth, open ended interviews centered around an interview guide designed to uncover underlying ethical values and structures of perception, or “belief systems.”

I give a further explanation of my three main aspects of enquiry, and the tools and methods used in collecting the data, in the sections entitled “theoretical perspectives,” and “methodology” below.

#### **1.4 Research problem**

Based on the aspects of enquiry with which I wished to pursue my research I found that my main research problem, or questions, could be formulated along the following lines: Have attitudes within the Norwegian Labour Party, concerning the free play of market forces within the welfare state, changed or remained stable since the early 1970s (the period of the onset of stagnation in the world economy according to many economists)? As for Labour Party members with personal experience of specific attempts at privatisation and competitive tendering, what sort of attitudes do they show? Are there differences in attitudes displayed towards privatisation and competitive tendering between the leadership of the Labour Party and the rank and file membership?

Here I would be attempting to uncover the processes of social interaction that produce certain types of grassroots response, and also possible changes of attitude amongst the leadership. Based on these questions, I attempted to conduct some sort of qualitative study of group processes within the Labour Party.

The main thrust of my research problem raises, however, a series of lesser, or partial questions (delspørsmål) concerning the nature of my analysis:

### **Ownership**

Do I wish primarily to conduct research as to the nature, and extent of “public ownership?” Public ownership, however, never was one of the major cornerstones of the Norwegian Social Democratic welfare state, therefore, investigating the extent of public ownership does not take us to the core of the problem. The Norwegian Social Democratic welfare state was based on a “mixed economy” with the emphasis being on the effective management of market forces rather than formal public ownership.

### **Privatisation**

Again, is it formal privatisation which is the issue here, or simply the extent to which the labour movement are prepared to allow market forces to operate within the public sector? These organisations can, for example, campaign against formal privatisation (as in the recent council by-election), but, at the same time, be in favour of a stronger role for market forces within the public sector.

### **Private sector/ public sector of the economy**

Do I wish to look at attempts at public control over private industry (for example: taxes on shareholders` profits, laws governing trading, and so on), or the role of private capitalism in the public sector? As I am primarily concerned with the future of the welfare state, I wish to concentrate on the public sector, and, perhaps, those parts of the public sector which are seen to be essential, perhaps irreplaceable, components of the welfare state: healthcare, childcare, schooling, pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits.

### **Competitive tendering**

This brings me to my next point: so-called competitive tendering or “konkurranseutsetting”. The Norwegian Labour Party can, feasibly, be in favour of maintaining formal public ownership, thereby, hopefully (for them), maintaining a certain legitimacy in the eyes of traditional voters. At the same time they can open the door, to a large extent, for market forces to operate, within the public sector, through encouraging such processes as competitive tendering, “outsourcing,” or “contracting out,” partial privatisation, and so on.

I decided that in order to get to the core of my research problem: attitudes towards the role of the market in the welfare state, then I must concentrate my research on so-called “competitive tendering” of such institutions as old peoples homes and healthcare institutions. This because such institutions are seen by almost everybody to

constitute an essential part of the main core of any welfare regime. At the same time, “competetive tendering” of such institutions has occurred, at different times and places, recently in Norway. This can, as already stated, allow the free play of market forces within the framework of formal public ownership, and therefore takes us to the core of the problem. It also made it possible for me to interview people who work, or have worked, in, or in connection with such institutions as have been subjected to competetive tendering (“konkurranseutsatt”).

## 2. Methodology

In this chapter I first give an account of my methodological approach. Then I give a closer presentation of the practical methods employed in the research.

### 2.1 Theory and practice

My methodological approach attempts to build upon Charles C. Ragin (1994) and his account of “The process of social research.” Ragin writes of how: **“Social research, in simplest terms, involves a dialogue between ideas and evidence. Ideas help social researchers make sense of evidence, and researchers use evidence to extend, revise, and test ideas. The end result of this dialogue is a representation of social life”** (Ragin. 1994: 55).

This is, I think, in keeping with several other theories of social research, such as, for example Tove Thagaard; **“I en posisjon mellom induksjon og deduksjon står abduksjon. Abduksjon framhever det dialektiske forholdet mellom teori og data (Alvesson og Skjoldberg 1994; Mason 1996). Analyse av data har en sentral plass når det gjelder å utvikle ideer, og forskerens teoretiske forankring gir perspektiver på hvordan dataene kan forståes”** (Thagaard. 1998: 174). Thagaards “abduksjon” is, perhaps, more or less identical to what Ragin calls “retroduction.”

The point here is that although abstract thought is necessary in order to understand social phenomena, pure theory does have a tendency to wind up stranded on the hard rocks of reality when put into a social context and used in a concrete situation: theory must always be tested against reality and thereafter revised. On the other hand, our understanding of the social world would be poor indeed if we did not have the rich array of social theories which sociologists can draw upon in conducting social research!

Also, as Silverman points out, qualitative research can never be completely free from some sort of theoretical starting point: **“The assumption that one should avoid the early specification of definitions and hypotheses has been common to field researchers since the 1930s...However, this does not mean that the early stages of field research are totally unguided...Without some perspective.....there is nothing to report. Contrary to the view of crude empiricists, the facts never speak for themselves**

.....Narrowing down is often the most crucial task when fieldworkers are tempted to throw the kitchen sink at their data...This means strictly defining your research problem, using concepts drawn from a particular *model*... Does this mean that your data and their analysis will be partial? Of course it does! But this is not a problem - unless you make the impossible claim to give “the whole picture.” So celebrate the partiality of your data and delight in the particular phenomena that they allow you to inspect” (Silverman 2001: 60, 61).

The model which Ragin (1994: 57) uses involves ideas, or social theories, interacting with data through “**images**” and “**analytic frames.**” Analytic frames are sets of ideas people use in order to understand phenomena. For social researchers analytic frames must be carefully specified in order to: “**make it possible for social researchers to see social phenomena in ways that enhance their relevance to social theory**” (Ragin 1994: 58).

Images, on the other hand, are based on data: “**To construct images researchers synthesize evidence**” (Ragin 1994: 58). Images are built up through collecting related sets of data. When I, for example, interview a rank and file, or “grassroots” member of the Labour Party, and they express certain opinions on related topics, then, in further interviews with other members I will be on the lookout for similar opinions being expressed, and in this way may be able to build up a certain image of a “typical” grassroots member of the Labour Party: “**In short, building images is primarily inductive...This process of synthesizing an image from evidence and refining it goes hand in hand with the process of analyzing the evidence using analytic frames...culminates in the representation of social life the researcher offers in a report of the results of a study...It is evidence shaped by ideas**”(Ragin 1994: 59).

In my research I attempt to use Ragin's model, and I try to combine an open minded approach to social theory with an open minded approach to the evidence. It is, however, impossible for me to completely separate the collection and sorting of data from the theoretical approaches to my research: theory is my guide throughout. I present my theoretical perspectives in the next chapter.

## **2.2 On my choice of “emotionalist” and “social-constructionist” qualitative research**

I was trying to uncover processes of social interaction, and how these processes affect people's norms, values, attitudes, and maybe even the ethical foundations upon which they base their “world views.” In depth, open ended interviews seemed appropriate here. In conducting such interviews I would be building on the methods of emotionalism and of social constructionism: “**Accounts are not simply**

**representations of the world; they are part of the world they describe” (Silverman 2001: 95). And: “Participation in a culture includes participation in the narratives of that culture, a general understanding of the stock of meanings and their relationship to each other” (Silverman 2001: 100).**

Emotionalism is concerned with interviewing people in such a way as to elicit as much as possible subjects personal accounts of their own experience. Objective facts are of lesser importance: the emphasis is on gaining “meaningful understanding of the person:” **“This means that emotionalists reject the positivist assumption that both interviewer and interviewee are properly treated as “objects.” Instead they depict both as (emotionally involved) subjects...the validity of the analysis are based on “deep understanding” (Silverman 2001: 91, 92).** Interviews should be conducted as conversations, with the interviewer also conveying her feelings on the subjects under discussion, in order to achieve “intersubjective depth.”

Constructionism seeks to understand how interviewees employ “cultural narratives” in order to convey meaning. Cultural narratives which are built up from socially transmitted norms of perception and behaviour. Respondants will build upon socially available sets of definitions, symbols, and cultural values, in order to present a socially accepted picture of themselves, or their views on the subject matter at hand.

Silverman argues that a synthesis of emotionalism and constructionism is possible. This involves a **“methodology for listening” (Silverman 2001: 100)**, using the emotionalist approach in terms of seeing the world from the point of view of the persons one is interviewing. This can be combined with the social constructionist approach of attempting to uncover how respondents are constructing a narrative based on **“culturally available resources.”**

Here my emphasis is also on, amongst other things; “interpreting significance” and “giving voice.” Ragin writes of how **“Sometimes...the researcher studies a group not simply to learn more about it, but also to contribute to its having an expressed voice in society...This approach...asserts that every group in society has a “story to tell.” Some groups (for example, business people, middle class whites, and so on), are represented in the mainstream beliefs and values of society...In research that seeks to give voice, social theories may help the researcher identify groups without voice and may help explain why these groups lack voice...When the goal of a project is to give voice to research subjects, it is important for the researcher to try to see their world through their eyes, to understand their social worlds as they do” (Ragin 1994: 43, 44).**

Rank and file members of the Labour Party are seldom interviewed in the newspapers or on T.V. I wanted to “give them voice.” I wanted to try and find out what were the opinions of “the backbone” of the party: the people who do the day to day work of running the party, maintaining the party apparatus, and campaigning in the

localities, being active, as Labour Party members, in the trade union movement, in local government, and amongst the “ordinary people.” I also wanted to uncover the opinions and attitudes of “ordinary people” who also just happened to be members of the Labour Party: not necessarily active members. I felt that there would probably be opinions expressed here, “social facts” at work, which would otherwise not usually come to the surface of “public opinion.” I wanted to do what I could in order to reveal these facts, or opinions. This would perhaps be in line with “critical theory.”

Critical theory, stating, for example, that oppressed groups can, should, and often do detect and unmask existing forms of “belief” established as ideology on behalf of their oppressors (used to justify oppression) as part of an ongoing struggle against that oppression. Perhaps I would find evidence of grassroots members of the Labour Party and people in their local communities joining together in criticism of, and actions directed against, processes of privatisation and competitive tendering which had been publicised as being beneficial to the community, but were in fact felt to be highly detrimental to many of those involved. Critical theory also relates to social mobilisation, based on solid ethical principles, which occurs when certain social groups are exposed to injustice and feel that they must engage in collective struggle in order to correct these injustices. Would I perhaps find evidence of such struggles?

### **Discourse analysis**

Another reason that I chose a qualitative method of research is simply the fact that I was interested in uncovering peoples understandings of the social processes of change occurring in their workplaces or communities: their perceptions of a changing reality, rather than the actual facts underlying these perceptions. Here the emphasis would be on how possibly quite different perceptions of reality co-exist within the same organization allowing us to draw up a dividing line between grassroots activists and the leadership. Here I felt that discourse analysis might prove to be a useful tool.

Discourse analysis argues that our social worlds are, at least partially, constituted through discourse. That our understandings of the world around us are discursively determined through particular sets of classifications which belong to particular discourses: discourses are unified sets of language use based on common perceptions of reality, or common assumptions of how one should behave, or what sort of values one should have.

Discourse analysis originated with Michel Foucault. For Foucault, much of our social reality was interactively created through “discursive practices:” ***“The archaeology of Knowledge thus constitutes a text which sets out to formulate descriptions about a neglected domain or field, namely the relations between statements” (Smart 2002: 39).*** These discursive practices constitute the ***“deployment of a “system of permanent and coherent concepts “” (Smart 2002: 39).*** These concepts are related,

first and foremost, through the everyday use of systematically related sets of terminology, or “interpretive repertoires” which certain groups of people employ in order to explain, and/or create/recreate their social worlds: **“which terms are recognized as valid, questionable, invalid.....and what individuals, groups, or classes have access to particular kinds of discourse. The ultimate objective of such an analysis of discourse is not to reveal a hidden meaning or deep truth, nor to trace the origin of discourse to a particular mind or founding subject, but to document its conditions of existence and the practical field in which it is deployed”** (Smart 2002: 48, 49). A theory, then, of discursive “commonsense practices” (Bourdieu 1990) employed by certain groups or classes, representing commonly perceived concepts of what is “valid,” or “invalid.”

In conducting discourse analysis my emphasis would be upon how **“interpretive repertoires”** as **“systematically related sets of terms”** are constructed in a social and cultural context in order to provide “coherent and persuasive justifications” for behaviour (Silverman. 2001: 178, 179).

Karin Wideberg, who also makes use of discourse analysis in her research, argues that the qualitative method of interviewing subjects is best suited to these purposes: **“Vi ville med andre ord intervjuer for å få fram forståelser, ikke fakta. Nå mener vi i og få seg at en slik forståelse er en type samfunnsmessig faktum. Den sier noe om de samfunnsmessige forståelsesmåtene vi lever etter og forstår våre liv gjennom. Og det var disse forståelsesmåtene og sammenhengene og mønstrene...som vi ønsket å løfte fram”** (Wideberg 2001: 58).

Furthermore, discourse analysis, as originally developed by Foucault, argued that particular discourses are historically determined. For example, following Foucault, one could argue that the idea of modern day “madness” is a discursive product aiming at **“the achievement of an enforcement and internalization of .....key structures and values of bourgeois society”** (Smart 2002: 24,25) and, as such, is entirely a product of systems of classification which belong to the modern day bourgeois epoch, and would be completely incomprehensible to people living in, for example, the middle ages, or classical antiquity. This because, in each historical epoch, certain sets of classifications are developed to describe social phenomena which are distinct, and particular to that particular epoch. These sets of classifications are based on related sets of statements which express the dominant values of the epoch (Smart 2002). Such an analysis, I felt, would be of particular interest, in terms of my own research, if one was to presume that a certain “social democratic discourse” may have arisen during a particular historical epoch.

According to the tenets of discourse analysis, a discursive universe will be created, based on a common perception of reality, with a common language being spoken and a common symbolism being invoked. The traditional language and

symbolism of “solidarity,” and “unity as strength” within Social Democracy must surely be a prime example of this common, discursive and symbolic cultural universe. This, of course, also leads to normative behaviour based on common “understandings,” and collective sanctioning of perceived social norms, such as, for example, when Berge Furre writes of “solidaritet, samhold og partidisciplin” which were “honnørord i miljøet” in the Norwegian Labour Party of the 1950s. I felt that an analysis of such “social democratic discourse” would provide a useful compliment to my main theoretical approach (discussed below).

In using discourse analysis as a useful methodological tool I would in no way be subscribing to the most radical approaches which state that our perceptions of reality are entirely determined by discourse. Rather I would be viewing analysis of discourse as simply one analytical tool, amongst many, which can shed some light upon certain aspects of our symbolic social universes.

### 2.3 Subject and object revisited

Some people might argue that theories of symbolic interactionism, or discourse analysis, cannot be combined with theories of “objective” social structures, in this case, ideologically or culturally constructed “social facts,” influencing individuals behaviour: That symbolic interactionism and discourse analysis are more suited to the study of “micro” phenomena, whereas the study of “macro” phenomena; how social structures influence people, lends itself to the use of quite another sort of analytical tool. I would beg to differ. I would argue that micro theories and macro theories should be combined in order to create a fuller understanding of the objective reality we are dealing with (as subjective individuals).

This would be wholly in keeping with some of the more recent developments in the theories of discourse analysis: Pirjo Nikander writes the following in commenting upon some of the debate between “The Manchester School” of discourse analysis, (which argues that various discourses concerning, primarily, power and ideology, are, in effect, “social facts:” transindividual, “objective” social phenomena), and “The Loughborough School,” (which sees discourses as subjective social phenomena, entirely the property of individuals, or groups of individuals): **“The whole debate seems to take us, once again, to a very familiar question, which this time can be written to the form: Do people use discursive repertoires or do discourses use people?...What I have tried to suggest is that an over-emphasis on interaction between active individuals renders invisible aspects of various cultural and ideological environments and makes us forget the materiality of power. At the same time, however, an overemphasis on discourse as existing independently of individuals makes the idea of resistance and change impossible...approaches where**



**individuals are treated as both the site and subject of discursive struggle for their identity should be encouraged instead” (Nikander 1995: 12, 13).**

I would also argue, along with Bourdieu that: **“Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism. The very fact that this division constantly reappears in virtually the same form would suffice to indicate that the modes of knowledge which it distinguishes are equally indispensable to a science of the social world that cannot be reduced either to a social phenomenology or to a social physics” (Bourdieu. 1990: 25).**

## **2.4 Practical method**

My research was to be twofold, involving both analysis of documents and open ended, in-depth interviews.

### **The library**

One could argue, along with Glaser and Strauss that the public library is an ideal place to conduct research: **“...sociologists need to be as skilled and ingenious in using documentary materials as in doing field work.....We need to be as effective as historians in the library...There are some striking similarities...between field work and library research. When someone stands in the library stacks, he is, metaphorically, surrounded by voices begging to be heard. Every book, every magazine article, represents at least one person who is equivalent to the anthropologists informant or the sociologists interviewee” (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 163).**

The library offers easy access to large amounts of research material. Furthermore, this is material where it should be difficult for the researcher to create bias due to her own intervention in the field: the material speaks for itself, so to speak. The only drawback I can see is that the material has already been processed by a third party: the journalist, author, or whoever has written the document, so, of course, it could be argued that bias has probably already been created. Here the sociology of knowledge could be applied in order to try and understand how the authors` own possible adherence to particular “ideological” standpoints or “world views” may create a particular kind of bias. Or how her position in a particular social institution can have influenced her journalistic “style”.

I do however feel that the “pros” of library research outway the “cons” in terms of freely available access to almost limitless information. The amount of field research I would anyhow be able to conduct, within the boundaries of this particular research project, would be severely limited.

I presumed that the labour movement library (“Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek”) would prove to be a rich source of material. This proved to be the case. Here I was able to conduct research on the minutes of Labour party annual meetings. I could also read through party programmes, reports and pamphlets of “propaganda.” In addition to this I discovered several reports by other researchers on related topics, such as the attitudes expressed by “normal” workers towards privatisation, and the need for welfare benefits. Also articles from newspapers proved useful.

### **Interview guide**

Based on the concepts of analysis stated above I drew up the interview guide which is reproduced below.

However, I decided that this was simply to be just that; a guide, not a blueprint. I felt that this was important as I was interested in trying to uncover as much as possible peoples own experiences of things, and, not least, the language and “systematically related sets of terms” which they employed when relating these experiences. The emphasis was to be on trying to “draw people out:” get them talking and then listen to what they had to say.

When interviewing people I emphasized that we did not have to keep to the questions: that if they “had something on their heart” they should tell me about it, and that if something suddenly “turned up” in the course of the conversation then we should pursue this. On the whole I tried, as much as is possible in an interview situation, to conduct the interviews as if they were normal conversations. This was a conscious strategy on my behalf as I was trying to get people to relax and to tell me as much as possible “in their own words.”

Interview guide:

1. How long have you been a member of the Labour Party?
2. Which posts or positions (verv) have you held within, or on behalf of the Labour Party?
3. Have you any personal experience of privatisation or “competetive tendering”?
4. Have you been involved in, heard about, any debate around “Third Way” politics within the labour Party? Possibly heard about theories stating that “we are all middle class now”?
5. There has been a lot of debate recently as to whether we have enough money to pay for peoples pensions in the future. What are your views on this subject? Do you think we have enough money?
6. There seems to be some agreement amongst economists that the world economy has been suffering from periods of crisis and stagnation since the 1970s: Many argue that

this leads to the need for “restructuring,” “downsizing,” “outsourcing,” and “competitive tendering” (or “konkurranseutsetting”) in order to boost economic growth. Have you been involved in, heard about, any debate around these theories within the Labour Party?

7. What are your opinions on the role of the public sector, and on the possible role of the market within the public sector? Do you think we need competitive tendering/privatisation for economic reasons?

8. Is there still talk of socialism within the Labour Party? Do members believe themselves to be working toward socialism? Is there talk of “market socialism”?

9. The Labour Party joined forces with the main public sector trade unions to campaign quite strongly against privatisation during the recent council by-election. This possibly signifies a change of attitude amongst at least some of the leadership: Is this the case, and if so, why do you think this has happened?

10. What are your thoughts on the chances of a centre/ left coalition winning the next general election? What sort of political strategy do you think the Labour Party should pursue as part of such an alliance?

I interviewed 6 people. All were long-standing members of the Labour Party. Most of them, as I mentioned earlier, worked within, or in connection with public sector workplaces which had either been partly privatised, or subjected to competitive tendering (“konkurranseutsett”). That is to say that they were either directly employed by such institutions, or that they were in some position of responsibility in relation to such institutions through their work as elected members of local authorities (Bydelsutvalgene). I was careful to make sure that I interviewed people from different areas of the city. I never interviewed two people from the same city borough (bydel).

### **analytic induction**

I was, of course, operating within a very narrow framework. At first, I had thought of doing research which would somehow be representative of general attitudes of both the grassroots, and the leadership, of the party, but soon realized that this would be well beyond the scope of my particular project! Thus, using a process akin to what Ragin (1994) calls “analytic induction” I began narrowing down what was to be the main target group of my research. I felt, for example, that Labour Party members who worked in the private sector might be inclined to be more in favour of competitive tendering, or privatisation, simply because they had no personal experience of the processes involved. I was interested in the attitudes of the people who had such experience. Was this experience positive, or negative, or both? I was interested in uncovering possible changes or stability as concerns key ethical values underlying the welfare state and I presumed that these values would be at their strongest amongst

people who worked in key institutions concerned with care in the community. I chose therefore to concentrate my interview material around people who worked in old peoples homes. I was mainly concerned with grassroots responses to processes of competitive tendering so a majority of my interviews would obviously have to be with local party and community activists, or grassroots members. In this way my images of my research subjects, and the concepts and categories guiding my research, were refined, sharpened, and clarified, until they became quite specific. I hoped to make my research as representative as possible of the attitudes of grassroots members of the party engaged in public sector activities and exposed to competitive tendering.

All of my interviews were conducted with people who were members of branches of the Labour Party with firm roots in the east of the city, or from traditional “working class” neighbourhoods (for example: “Groruddalen”). I interviewed 4 women and two men. One of the men I interviewed was not simply a “grassroots” activist: he has been a part of the central leadership of the Labour Party in Oslo for 20 years. He has, amongst other things, been the leader of his local party branch for 8 years. The leader of his local county council (BU) for two years, a member of this council (councillor) for 6 years, a secretary for the city council for a period of four years, a deputy councillor for the city council for a period of 4 years, and a political advisor to the Government Department of Finance.

My interviews resulted in 56 pages of notes.

### **3. Theoretical perspectives**

I felt that an analysis of symbolic structures of meaning which are an important component of group life, and the life of organizations, would prove useful. In particular Herbert Blumers (1998) theories of symbolic interactionism which claim to uncover the group processes by which the meaning of “objects” are created by the participants (through “action”).

I also attempt to build theoretically upon some conclusions reached in earlier research conducted by Bowles and Gintis, and Christensen and Læg Reid (see below).

I also felt that theories on the internal workings of organisations, and processes of bureaucratization would be highly relevant.

However, my main theoretical foundation will be the theories of Michael Burawoy (2000) on how global economic and political forces affect everybody's lives, often provoking quite radical, localized, grassroots responses to global trends.

#### **3.1 Symbolic interactionism**

Herbert Blumer saw “symbolic interactionism” as an empirical science designed to uncover the true nature of group processes: **“It is my conviction that an empirical science necessarily has to respect the nature of the empirical world that is its**

**object of study. In my judgement symbolic interactionism shows that respect for the nature of human group life and conduct” (Blumer 1998: vii).** He claimed to have uncovered, through empirical study, the processes of symbolic social interaction within groups which provided “objects” with “meaning” for the members of the group: **“human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.....the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one`s fellows” (Blumer 1998: 2).**

Human individuals constantly engage in processes of social interaction which, amongst other things, involve the ongoing process of defining and redefining the meaning of “things.” This process occurs as a collective endeavor whereby meanings, norms and sanctions which are the property of the group are always open to a certain redefinition based upon the input of particular individuals partly unique interpretation of these things. A group consists of individuals each with their own partially unique interpretation of the meaning of things. A process of interaction involving the constant redefining of the meaning of things is necessary as the group will be involved in “action” together: putting the meaning of things into practice and, to some extent at least, analysing, or at least redefining, the results of that practice: **“The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action” (Blumer 1998: 5).** This idea of the processes of “action” in which individuals, as members of groups, partake, and through which they define the meaning of things, is very important to Blumer: **“Human groups are seen as consisting of human beings who are engaging in action. The action consists of the multitudinous activities that the individuals perform in their life as they encounter one another and as they deal with the succession of situations confronting them. The individuals may act singly, they may act collectively, and they may act on behalf of, or as representatives of some organization or group of others” (Blumer 1998: 6).**

The “things” which are ascribed “meaning” are also described as “objects.” Objects can be anything from concrete physical objects, to social institutions, to **“abstract concepts such as moral principles, philosophical doctrines, or ideas such as justice, exploitation, or compassion” (Blumer 1998: 10,11).** Furthermore, the meaning of objects is constantly being created/ recreated, defined/ redefined through dynamic ongoing processes of social interaction within groups.

Of some importance to our analysis is the fact that the meaning of objects is defined through group processes which will be somewhat distinctive to that particular group at that particular time. This can lead to one and the same object having highly

different meanings for different groups, even though these groups may occupy the same spatial location: **“the President of the United States can be a very different object to a devoted member of his political party than to a member of the opposition; the members of an ethnic group may be seen as a different kind of object by members of other groups.....Out of a process of mutual indications common objects emerge-objects that have the same meaning for a given set of people.....From their standpoint the environment consists *only* of the objects that the given human beings recognize and know....Individuals, also groups, occupying or living in the same spatial location may have, accordingly, very different environments .....people may be living side by side yet be living in different worlds”** (Blumer 1998: 11).

I felt that this last point would prove useful in analysing differing responses to attempts at competitive tendering and privatisation, depending upon where particular individuals were situated in terms of group processes in which they were involved, and their place in the social hierarchy.

### **3.2 Other research on related topics**

I also found, in the Workers Movement Library, that there were two other recent research papers which, in particular, captured my interest. Here I will give a short account of both of them. Both were quantitative studies, so I felt that they would prove a valuable supplement to my qualitative approach (or vice versa). They also provide a certain theoretical foundation for my further research inasmuch as conclusions are reached upon which I can attempt to build further, at least to some extent, within the framework of my rather limited empirical study.

#### **1. Bowles and Gintis**

Bowles and Gintis base their study on a survey conducted in ten different countries: Australia, West Germany, Great Britain, USA, Austria, Italy, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada. The survey was conducted in 1992 by the International Social Survey. Writing in the year 2000, Bowles and Gintis claim that this is **“the most recent year for which comprehensive data are available”** (Bowles and Gintis 2000: 34).

A variety of statements were presented to respondents who stated whether or not they agreed with them. A very high percentage of respondents, in fact large majorities, in all countries, agreed with the following statement: **“people with high incomes should pay a larger share of their income in taxes than those with low incomes.”** The percentage agreeing with this statement was between 70% and 90% in every country (Norway scored around 75%).

Majorities in every country except Sweden, USA, and Canada agreed with the following statement: **“The government should provide everyone with a guaranteed basic income.”** Here, in fact, Norway had the highest score, around 78-80%.

Norway had the same score (78-80%) on the amount of people agreeing with the following statement: **“The government should provide a job for everyone who wants one.”** Here, Italy had the highest score, around 88%, whilst only the USA, Australia and Canada had minorities who supported this statement.

The same applies (only the USA, Canada and Australia having minorities who supported the statement) to the statement: **“it is the responsibility of the government to reduce differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.”**

Here also Italy scored the highest, around 82% (Norway scored around 60%).

### **“Voluntary egalitarian redistribution”**

Bowles and Gintis conclude that this study of the “advanced economies,” showing that even “well off,” or wealthy members of the electorate, and an overwhelming overall majority in all countries surveyed, support progressive taxation, and the fact that a vast majority show support for general values which endorse welfare state policies, is an example of “norms of reciprocity” which fly in the face of accepted economic theory.

Quoting 13th century epic Norse verse (“The Edda”) on how **“A man ought to be a friend to his friend and repay gift with gift”** and **“People should meet smiles with smiles and lies with treachery,”** they write the following: **“We find that voters support the welfare state because it conforms to deeply held norms of reciprocity and conditional obligation to others” (Bowles and Gintis 2000: 33).**

Bowles and Gintis claim that this contradicts classical economic theory (“Homo Economicus”) which bases itself on the idea that human beings are basically selfish and individualistic (hence Margaret Thatcher’s famous statement that “there is no such thing as society”). According to Bowles and Gintis the “theory of selfish human motivation” is “empirically implausible” (Bowles and Gintis 2000: 33). They argue that the data uncovered by the International Social Survey invalidates such simplistic economic theories. Instead theories based on explaining norms and values which endorse social solidarity are needed: **“there can be little doubt that the considerable support for the modern welfare state even among the well-to-do constituents is the most significant case in human history of a substantially voluntary egalitarian redistribution of income among total strangers” (Bowles and Gintis 2000: 33).**

## **2. Christensen and Læg Reid**

Tom Christensen and Per Læg Reid have written a paper with the title: **“Politisk styring og privatisering: holdninger i elitene og befolkningen.”**

They focus on how **“attitudes towards political control of state-owned companies and privatization”** vary according to the extent to which they are affected by **“demographic background, structural factors and political-cultural variables.”**

They base their **“empirical data”** on two surveys carried out by the Power and Democracy Study. The first survey is conducted on **“elites”** in the year 2000. The second is conducted on **“citizens”** in the year 2001.

They claim to have achieved the following results:

**“The findings are: a) that a great majority among elites want more privatization and less political control; b) that there are significant differences between elites and the people on these issues - citizens are more sceptical of privatization and more positive to political control than elites; c) that there are major differences between different elite groups on these issues - Church leaders are more in line with citizens than business leaders; d) that the variations in attitudes among citizens and among elite groups can be traced back to the political party they sympathize with, but there are also effects of sector affiliation, gender, age and level of education.”** (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 385).

Christensen and Lægreid write of how modern day “reforms” of the public sector (occurring in the last twenty years) have been given the title “New Public Management” (NPM) (Hood 1991). They claim there is a basic contradiction in NPM-reforms: on the one hand a tendency towards increasing amounts of control and supervision, but, on the other hand, an emphasis on increased autonomy and flexibility: **“Det demokratiske dilemmaet er hvor langt man kan gå i retning av økt frihet for de utøvende virksomhetene uten at folkevalgte mister styring og kontroll”** (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 386). However, they claim that pressure to implement NPM-reforms in Norway has not been as strong as in other countries, partly because the Norwegian economy has been strong, and relatively stable, and partly due to the fact that: **“Samtidig har ikke Norge hatt kulturelle tradisjoner som har vært særlig kompatible med NPM”** (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 387).

At the same time, they admit that Norway has, nonetheless, introduced reforms inspired by New Public Management theories. Not least because the political parties of the right have pushed for such reforms, but also because the Norwegian Labour Party has also been inspired by NPM theories (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 387). Also the fact that the trade union movement has been on the defensive over a number of years has played into the hands of those who would introduce NPM-reforms.

As far as the Labour Party is concerned, they have also been on the defensive, and they also have long traditions of political pragmatism (combined with strong social democratic symbolism). They have, therefore, had a tendency to try and adopt “outsourcing,” or “fristilling,” as an attempt to defend the perceived need for the maintenance of a strong public sector: **“Norsk forvaltningspolitikk har vært preget**



av en blanding av symbol og retorikk på den ene siden og av pragmatiske og instrumentelle reformtiltak på den andre siden.....I en situasjon hvor en stor offentlig sektor er under press og på defensiven, får fristilling tilslutning både av høyresiden som ser fristilling som en mellomstasjon på veien til privatisering og fra Arbeiderpartiet som ser fristilling som et forsvar for en fortsatt stor offentlig sektor (Christensen and Lærgreid 2003: 388).

The turning point for NPM policies in Norway came in 1994 when the telecommunications giant “Televerket” was turned into a shareholding company: **“Senere har post, jernbane, elektrisitetsproduksjon, kornforsyning, kringkasting, statsskogene, sykehusene, vegbygging og flyplassdrift endret tilknytningsform fra forvaltningsorgan til ulike selskapsformer. Etter en bred offentlig debatt og en opphetet diskusjon i Arbeiderpartiet i 2000, ble det vedtatt at Statoil og Telenor skulle delprivatiseres (Hoel 2002)”** (Christensen and Lærgreid 2003: 389).

And furthermore: **“Den sittende regjeringen har gjennom sin eierskapsmelding om “et mindre og bedre statlig eierskap” klart signalisert et ønske om å gå videre i denne retning (St. meld. nr. 22 (2001-2002)). Mange av disse er store selskaper med mange ansatte som Telenor, Posten og NSB. Denne fristillingen har medført at antallet årsverk i statens forvaltningsorganer har blitt redusert fra 167.586 i 1990 til 118.643 i 2002 (St. prp. nr.1 (2002-2003)).”**

Differences of opinion between elites and the people can be partially explained by the fact that social actors operate within the limits of bounded rationality, and therefore have an oversimplified view of the world. It is simply not possible, either for elites, or for the people, to have access to all available information on causes and effects, intentions, attitudes, political theories, norms and values concerning privatisation, outsourcing, and competitive tendering. Based on this limited capacity people have to make choices: the ideal of an active reform politic based on cold judgement and calculation of means and ends is difficult to live up to. This leads to other factors playing an important role when shaping peoples attitudes. The elites may think differently from the people partly because it is more difficult for them to manipulate the people through passing down their own partial view of the world than it is to convince each other of the perceived necessity of “downsizing” the public sector. This limited ability to influence people outside ones own social group is tied to such social factors as ones place in “the political-administrative system,” social background and political identity.

For example; position in a structure will produce “trained incapacity:” people will view the world according to their work with particular tasks, according to their position in a particular hierarchy, or according to their position in a particular organisation, or sector, with particular functions. Attitudes towards more room for the free play of market forces in the public sector will also depend partly on whether one is

dependant upon the public sector for ones livelihood: **“Det er blitt påvist en “offentlig sektor klasse” som er mer statsvennlig og negativt innstilt til markedsløsninger enn tilsvarende yrker i privat sektor (Lafferty og Knudsen 1984, Lafferty 1989)” (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 391).**

They expected, therefore, to find that people working in the public sector would be more negative to privatisation and competitive tendering than people who worked in the private sector.

Also political activity and “political identity” can have a strong effect on attitudes towards privatisation and political control: **“En sentral variabel er partipolitisk tilknytning som for eliten måles ved hvilket parti de stemte på ved forrige valg og for befolkningen ved hvor de plassere seg langs venstre-høyre dimensjonen i politikken” (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 392, 393).**

It was anticipated that the stronger a persons political comittment, the more likely it would be that this would affect their attitudes towards privatisation and political control: **“Den tradisjonelle venstre-høyre dimensjonen i norsk politikk er sterkt knyttet til befolkningens syn på offentlig kontroll og styring i motsetning til private løsninger. Synet på offentlig versus privat sektor er den viktigste og mest stabile av alle de ideologiske dimensjonene som er studert i norsk valgforskning (Aardal og Valen 1989).” (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 393).**

In the elite category the conservative party (Høyre) had much stronger support than amongst the people (33% “oppslutning”). “Fremskrittspartiet” received support from only 1% of people in this category. 34% of people in this category voted for the Labour Party in the last general election.

### **Empirical data**

The study of “elites” was conducted upon people occupying leading positions in society: top bosses in research and education, military defence institutions, central government, the church, the “cultural sector,” the media, big business, “organisations,” politics, the police, and the legal system.

The study was conducted in the form of personal interviews, and the material covers answers from 1710 people in the period; July 2000 - February 2001. An interview was achieved with 87% of the original selection.

The study of “citizens” was based on a national survey of 5000 people in the age group 18-84 years old in the period, February - June 2001: “Svarprosenten var 47%. Frafallet etter kjønn og alder variere lite og utvalget kan regnes som representativt blant de som er i alderen 18-75 år etter disse kjennetegnene. Eldre kvinner er imidlertid noe underrepresentert.”

The dependant variables were: attitudes towards political control of “fristilte selskaper” and towards privatisation. In both surveys the following two questions were

asked: “Den politiske styringen av en rekke fristilte offentlige selskaper, som for eksempel Telenor, NSB og Posten, er for svak og bør styrkes” and “I Norge bør man vektlegge mer privatisering og en mindre offentlig sektor.” In the survey of elites, both questions had four possible answers: “helt enig, delvis enig, delvis uenig, og helt uenig.” Whilst in the survey of “the people” there was a fifth possible answer: “Verken enig eller uenig.”

### **Analysis of empirical data**

A majority of the Norwegian “elite” were for more privatisation of the public sector and against stronger control of “fristilte” public companies. In both cases the numbers were around 60%.

Two main elite groups, however, immediately show themselves to be much stronger proponents of privatisation and competitive tendering than all other elite groups. These are the leaders of private industry (“privat næringsliv”) and the leaders of public business enterprises (“offentlig næringsliv”). The leaders of private industry, when presented with the question; “I Norge bør man vektlegge mer privatisering og en mindre offentlig sektor,” scored 73% on the answer: “Helt enig” and only 1% on the answer: “helt uenig.” For the leaders of public business enterprises the corresponding answers were: “Helt enig:” 48% and: “helt uenig:” 2%. These scores were much higher (and lower) than all other elite groups. However, one other elite group did come close to such scores: this was military defence (“Forsvaret”), scoring 41% and 4% respectively.

The same sort of pattern appeared also with the answers to the question; “Den politiske styringen av en rekke fristilte offentlige selskaper, som for eksempel Telenor, NSB og Posten, er for svak og bør styrkes.” Here the leaders of private industry, and the leaders of public business enterprises scored 55% and 67% respectively on the answer: “helt uenig.” The two other groups which came closest to them were: “Sentralforvaltningen” and: “Politi, rettsvesenen,” both scoring 35%.

Similar tendencies are uncovered when studying professional and industrial bodies (“interesseorganisasjoner”). 28% of people occupying leading positions in employer organisations (“arbeidsgiverforeninger”) were of the opinion that political control of public enterprises was too weak, whilst this was the case for 58% of people in leading positions in the trade unions and related bodies (“arbeidstakerorganisasjoner”). When it came to endorsing the perceived need for more privatisation the figures for these two groups were 87% and 33% respectively.

The leaders of employee organisations are presumably influenced by the attitudes of the members of such organisations. And again, presumably, members of public sector trade unions, who work “on the shopfloor” of the public sector, are more inclined to be against privatisation and for political control.

Politicians, however, feel themselves obliged to oppose too much downsizing of the public sector: **“Mest motstand mot privatisering og nedbygging av offentlig sektor finner vi blant politiske ledere, en gruppe som domineres av stortingsrepresentantene. At 64% av de politiske lederne er helt eller delvis uenig i at man bør vektlegge mer privatisering, avspeiler at ønsket om en stor offentlig sektor fortsatt har bred politisk oppslutning i Norge”** (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 396).

Furthermore, the results show that sex, age and level of education also have some significant effect. However, for our analysis, it is the political-cultural variables which are most important. The empirical data shows that voting patterns show a more positive correlation with negative attitudes towards the free play of market forces than does membership of political parties. There is a strong positive correlation between voting preferences and attitudes towards privatisation: people who vote for right wing parties are decided supporters of privatisation and people who vote for left wing parties are conscious opponents of the same.

Also, this correlation is stronger, concerning both variables, when people are asked about attitudes towards privatisation, rather than when they are asked about political control of state owned companies: **“Noe som viser at dette er et politisk spørsmål som oppfattes som mer ideologisk betent”** (Christensen and Lægreid 2003: 399). The positive correlation between voting preference and attitudes towards political control of state owned companies is a moderate one, but it is enough to show that people who vote for right wing parties tend to be against political control, and vice-versa.

As concerns the attitudes of “the people” there are clear tendencies in the material: whilst 31% of “the elite” agree entirely that we should have more privatisation, only 15% of the people do the same. As concerns the perceived need for more political control of state owned businesses 36% of the elite totally disagree, whilst only 13% of the people do the same.

In summing up Christensen and Lægreid point out that, all things considered, it is people whose sympathies lie with the left wing political parties, who have a reasonably low level of education, are reasonably older (“høy alder”), and who work in the public sector, who are those most likely to say that they want more political control of state owned companies.

Also that if you are a left wing sympathizer, work in the public sector, and are a woman, then you are most likely to be an opponent of more privatisation, competitive tendering and downsizing of the public sector: **“Holdningen til privatisering og nedbygging av offentlig sektor varierer i enda sterkere grad med om man står til høyre eller venstre i politikken, og den sterke bivariante sammenhengen holder seg i den multivariate analysen. Dette er tydelig et holdningsmønster som i stor grad**

**følger de ideologiske skillelinjene mellom sosialdemokratiske og borgerlige velgere.” (Christensen and Læg Reid 2003: 405).**

And the following as part of their conclusion: **“Avslutningsvis kan man spørre om hvilke implikasjoner disse analyseresultatene kan ha for mulighetene til vellykket gjennomføring av reformer og folkelig oppslutning om disse. Vi har vist at partitilknytning spiller en markert rolle i holdningene til privatisering og politisk styring. Samtidig er det et ønske om privatisering både fra Arbeiderpartiet og fra de borgerlige partiene, om enn med ulikt omfang og intensitet. Dette kan tyde på at de borgerlige partiene er mer på linje med sine velgere i reformbestrebelsene, mens Arbeiderpartiet står overfor egne velgere som er mer skeptiske” (Christensen and Læg Reid 2003: 408).**

### **3.3 Bureaucrats, Bureaucracy and “The Iron Law of Oligarchy”**

I decided to attempt to build upon Michels` theory of “the Iron Law of Oligarchy” (Michels:1982) and my own theory of “countervailing tendencies.” I presumed that both processes might well be at work within the modern day Norwegian Labour Party.

#### **The “Iron Law of Oligarchy”**

In analysing German social democracy at the beginning of the last century, the young Marxist (and student of Max Weber) Robert Michels (1911) developed the theory of the “Iron Law of Oligarchy” (Collins 1985: 99,100) (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2000) (Korsnes, Andersen, Brante 1997). As a compliment to, or a continuation of, Weber`s theory of rationalization, Michels theory can go a long way towards explaining why we find these contradictory tendencies between the leadership and the rank and file membership of the Norwegian Labour Party.

Michels` “iron law” operates along the following principles: a tension exists between the need a democratic organisation (in this case a social democratic political party, or a workers trade union) has for the efficient running of the organisation (or the efficient running of the national economy), and the rank and file members ability to control decision making and execution of policy. As they grow in size and influence, these organisations become more and more complex and a more or less permanent division of labour develops; with stable bureaucracies needed in order to cope efficiently with the problems of administration. The bureaucratic officials, well trained in the efficient running of the organisation “by virtue of their expertise and experience,” become “indispensable and difficult to change even when subject to periodic re-election” (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2000: 246). These permanent bureaucracies, constantly re-elected through lack of alternatives, develop into elites with their own distinctive, collective interests over and above the interests of the membership. They go through psychological changes and forget the original goals of the organisation. Here,

the process of specialization also plays a role: **“As the party bureaucracy increases, two elements which constitute the essential pillars of every socialist conception undergo an inevitable weakening: an understanding of the wider and more ideal cultural aims of socialism, and an understanding of the international multiplicity of its manifestations. Mechanism becomes an end in itself.....in proportion as....paths of activity were opened for the socialists.....the more did a recognition of the demands of the everyday life of the party divert their attention from immortal principles. Their vision gained in precision but lost in extent.....the labour leader.....as the outcome of inevitable psychophysiological laws...could find little time and was likely to have little inclination for the study of the great problems of the philosophy of history....he would incline to deny the good sense and even the socialism of all who might desire to fight upon another ground and by other means than those familiar to him within his narrow sphere as a specialist” (Michels 1982: 337,338).**

This is more or less identical to the “trained incapacity” of which Christensen and Lægveid comment upon when they write of peoples limited ability to influence people outside their own social group as being tied to such social factors as ones place in “the political-administrative system,” social background and political identity. Also that a persons position in a structure will produce “trained incapacity:” people will view the world according to their work with particular tasks, according to their position in a particular hierarchy, or according to their position in a particular organisation with particular functions.

In addition, the bureaucratic elites have a monopoly on information and in this case, political argument, within the organisation: **“the elite controls the organizational machinery for intercommunicating among themselves and also for defining reality to its members. The members of the elite, too, tend to identify the interests of the organization with their own career interests. Whatever makes the organisation safe, secure, and wealthy, benefits its leaders, who thereby derive prominent and cushy jobs....Leaders become attached to the status quo; they compromise with their environment and do whatever they feel is necessary just to keep the organization surviving, no matter how far it takes the organization from the official ideals for which it was set up” (Collins 1985: 99,100).** “Goal displacement” takes place. The membership, although in a majority, often lack the resources, or initiative, to mobilise in defence of their own collective interests, or the original goals of the organisation.

Also in the case of social democracy the leaders become somewhat incorporated into leading positions in society in general: they become members of parliament, state bureaucrats, or trade union bureaucrats who spend much of their time sitting in meetings or negotiations with top bosses. This leads them to be influenced by ruling

class ideology. For, as Miliband(1973) points out, it is not just the logic of rationalization and bureaucracy which influences the leadership of social democracy in the direction of support for the logic of the capitalist economy (and away from their original goals of achieving a socialist society), but also capitalist, or ruling class, ideology.

Goal displacement takes place also, perhaps, within the organisations of Norwegian social democracy. Of course, social democratic leaders will also be influenced by socialist, or social democratic, values and ideology, but as they move closer to “the corridors of power” then, perhaps, “ruling class ideology,” along with the logic of rationalization, will weigh more heavily upon them than their former socialist ideals.

### **Countervailing tendencies**

There are however countervailing tendencies to the “iron law of oligarchy:” sometimes the membership do find the resources to mobilise on behalf of their own collective interests. In this case, “class interests.”

Finn Olstad (1991) has many examples of how the rank and file of the Norwegian labour movement have mobilised amongst themselves and forced their collective will upon both, their employers, their own leaders in the trade unions and the Labour Party, and even upon the government. “Go-slow” actions and “absenteeism” at work, illegal strikes and civil disobedience were the weapons they used. The introduction of the eight hour working day in Norway was achieved, amongst other things, through mass illegal strikes while the trade union leaders sat in negotiations. Absenteeism was used as a weapon against working on Saturdays. Go-slow actions and illegal strikes were used in order to gain wage increases and to fight against attempts at “increasing productivity.”

Olstad writes of the “second great class compromise” in Norway; the period after 1945, when the Labour Party had its first majority government: **“Tro likevel ikke at den norske arbeider var en maktesløs figur. Han måtte nok se på at arbeidsgiverne vred seg unna direkte statlig styring....men grunnplanet i arbeiderbevegelsen satte samtidig premisser for samfunnsutviklingen, både ved et stille press og aktiv klassekamp i bedriftene.**

**Vern om sysselsetting og økende velstand var krav som lederne i arbeiderbevegelsen - og i staten - måtte ta hensyn til” (Olstad 1991: 146).**

And: **“Gjennom aggressiv lokal klassekamp forsvarte arbeiderne sin ære og sine materielle interesser. Arbeidsfreden i etterkrigstida var langt fra absolutt....**

**Slik var lokal arbeidermakt en av de sterke kreftene i etterkrigssamfunnet og et formidabelt hinder mot tiltak som bedriftene, regjeringen og til dels lederne i**

**Arbeiderpartiet og fagbevegelsen ønsket å gjennomføre, f.eks. når det gjaldt rasjonalisering og økt arbeidsinnsats” (Olstad 1991: 152).**

One of his examples is how militant direct action amongst the rank and file of the trade union movement led to an extra weeks holiday in 1948, thus providing Norwegian workers with three weeks holiday well before any other country had the same. The Labour Party government felt forced to pass a law providing everybody with three weeks holiday after illegal direct action in 1946 and 1947 where over 25% of the Norwegian workforce had simply taken an extra weeks holiday without their employers consent. (Olstad 1991: 148).

Olstads study shows that grassroots members of democratic organisations are often capable of mobilising amongst themselves and forcing their own leaders to act on their behalf. This partly because localized group processes occur whereby the members definition of reality comes to contradict that of the central leadership (“lokal arbeidermakt”). These processes involve, not least, the construction, and constant reconstruction, of linguistic symbols which define reality for the group, and which can lead to different groups within the same organisation occupying completely “different worlds” (Blumer 1998: 11). As Sverre Lysgaard (1961) seems to suggest, the word “solidarity,” for example, can have two very different meanings, for a member of the same Labour Party, depending on whether one is in a position of responsibility concerning the efficient running of the national economy, with all the compromises, and considerations of different group interests this entails, or if one is a member of a local factory shop floor collective simply trying to resist the demands made upon the group in the name of productivity increases.

### **3.4 Global ethnography**

Michael Burawoy attempts a new theory of “global ethnography.” He states that while ethnographical research in sociology (and social anthropology) has been confined to **“processes in bounded communities or negotiated orders in institutions”** and therefore **“intended for the small scale”** (Burawoy 2000: 1) he sets out to combine ethnographical research with a global perspective on **“forces, connections and imaginations”** (Burawoy 2000: 5). In this very important respect he states that he **“departs from convention”** (Burawoy 2000: 1), but where would science be without people who depart from convention?

The possible connections between global economic and political forces, not least, the forces of global capitalism, and localized group processes of responses to the influence of such forces, is possibly a rather neglected domain in the social sciences. Michael Burawoy attempts a study of such connections, stating that **“anthropology was silent about imperialism”** and ethnography was **“silent about capitalism”** and the interplay of **“class forces”** (Burawoy 2000: 10). He writes the following: **“As I**



**shall have cause to repeat and as others have said before me, without an analysis either of capitalism or of the state, it is impossible to understand first the transformation of America and then of the world in the twentieth century” (Burawoy 2000: 10).**

He takes as his starting point the Chicago School of Sociology, and in particular the well known anthropological work of Thomas and Znaniecki culminating in the book (five volumes) “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America” (1918-1920), which he sees as a cornerstone of the early Chicago School. Whilst praising the book for its` insights, he also criticises it sharply for lacking any analysis of the economic driving forces of a global capitalist economy, with international demands for labour flows (such as those of Polish peasants: from their homeland to Chicago): **“They do not, however, have a corresponding analysis of the labour demand-the steel mills, the meat packers, the new manufacturers, and the garment industry-that made Chicago a magnet of immigrant labor in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth” (Burawoy 2000: 9).** Consequently: ***“The Polish Peasant was, therefore, global ethnography without a theory of globalization. Such theories were, of course, available in the writings of Lenin, Luxemburg, Hillferding, and other socialists, but nothing could have been further from the liberal pragmatism of the early Chicago sociology” (Burawoy 2000: 10).***

According to Burawoy, this same lack of insight into the wider social, economic, class, and historical context of the social settings/processes which ethnographers were studying remained a hallmark of the Chicago School, though they did produce some very good sociology “from below:” **Ironically, the Chicago studies revealed that institutions created the problems they were supposed to solve. inmates learned to behave like the insane, workers learned to restrict output. These institutional ethnographies presented a world as it appeared from below, from the standpoint of the worker, the inmate, the patient. There was little attempt, however, to study the external pressures that led managers to impose specific forms of control, how these may change over time, or how inmates might draw on outside resources to challenge institutional powers” (Burawoy 2000:14).**

The breakthrough in ethnography, for Burawoy, came when social anthropology was forced into an **“awakening to the challenges of decolonization” (Burawoy 2000:15)** with the advent of the Manchester School of Social Anthropology, and in particular Godfrey Wilson`s book: “The Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia” (1941, 1942): **“Wilson explores *global forces* that were wreaking havoc with tribal society. Wilson begins with the disequilibrium of the depression-era world economy in which capital accumulation outpaces consumption, propelling the search for raw materials and new markets. The global crisis has its local manifestation in Broken Hill, where international capital has begun to excavate**

**zinc in 1906” (Burawoy 2000:15, 16).** This last point about capital accumulation outpacing consumption, and leading to changes in international relations between labour and capital, is extremely similar to the remarks of Robert Brenner (and other modern day marxists) quoted above. Brenner, it should be remembered, talks of a crisis of overproduction in the world economy since about 1973, and a “sharp fall in manufacturing profit rates” (Brenner 2002) leading, amongst other things, to a political backlash from the right in Britain and the USA, and the birth of “neoliberalism.”

Burawoy states that such wider historical, economic, and class perspectives, combined with “the extended case method” (Burawoy 2000: 16) now helped make truly “global ethnography” a possibility. However it is important to remember that:

**“Changes in theory dictated changes in fieldwork technique.....Africans were not moral dupes who simply executed norms; like everyone else, they contended over the interpretation of norms, manipulating them in the pursuit of interests. The Mancunians, therefore, followed cases-kinship factions, succession struggles, property disputes” (Burawoy 2000:17).** This is somewhat reminiscent of Blumer’s emphasis on group processes of dynamic social interaction which constantly lead to the creation/ recreation of “meaning,” or the interpretation of norms and values, for members of the group.

Burawoy’s main thesis is based on the fact of “globalisation” involving processes which touch everybody’s lives, not least those of the ethnographer: **“All these accounts share a common theme: globalization as the recomposition of time and space-displacement, compression, distancing, and even dissolution. Here lies the connection to the ethnographer, whose occupation is, after all, to study others in “their space and time.”.....ethnographers attune themselves to the horizons and rhythms of their subjects’ experience. The ethnographer has, therefore, a privileged insight into the lived experience of globalization....Indeed global ethnographers cannot be outside the global processes they study.....They are also embedded in the time-space rhythms, not only of intimate relations, academic routines.....but also of distinctively global processes” (Burawoy 2000: 4)** And the following: **“our projects take globalization as a constellation of forces that impinge upon people’s lives....significant economic, political, and technological changes in the world in the last quarter century have led to a shrinking world, an ever more integrated global economy.....whose ongoing logic continues to reshape lives and institutions” (Burawoy 2000: 43).**

Inasmuch as competitive tendering and privatisation are international phenomena reflecting **“Neoliberal discourses of need” (Burawoy 2000: 342)** I felt that Burawoy’s analysis could shed some light on the social, economic, political, and, indeed, historical processes which I was to study.

Furthermore, Burawoy is very concerned with the study of local community, or group, reactions, or responses to global forces affecting peoples lives. Also in this respect I felt that Burawoy's work would be well suited to an analysis of group responses within the Norwegian Labour Party to attempts at restructuring of the public sector: **"The third perspective demystifies globalization as something given, natural and eternal-an ideology behind which corporations, governments, parties, unions, and so forth all justify their self-interested action as driven by global pressures. We study how different images of globalization are produced and disseminated, and how they can galvanize social movements"** (Burawoy 2000: 31).

Perhaps most important for my study, in terms of comparing cases, would be the research conducted by Steve Lopez (under the auspices of Michael Burawoy) into the group responses of care workers, along with members of their local community, towards attempts at privatisation of nursing homes in Pittsburgh (USA). Not least their utilization, and mobilization of **"home-grown counter-ideologies"** (Burawoy 2000: 31, 32).

#### **4. Experiences from the field**

Here I will briefly outline how and where my interviews took place. I will also give a short presentation of the general nature of the interviews; differences and similarities, the sex, age and occupation of the "interview subjects," as well as my initial preparations and my work with writing out the final drafts of the interviews afterwards.

I will also give an account of my own personal feelings before, during and after each interview as I feel these are relevant in as much as they may have influenced the responses I received during the interviews.

##### **4.1 Access to the field**

Access to the field was obtained through friends and acquaintances: "someone who knows someone." The neighbour of some friends, people I had worked with or been involved in political, or trade union work with, people I or my children had got to know through our hobbies and interests outside of school and work, people whom my friends had worked with, or been involved in political, or trade union work with, and so on.

In order to set up the interviews I got hold of peoples phone numbers and gave them a call (in some cases I already had peoples numbers). In at least two cases, friends of mine approached people they new and asked for an interview on my behalf, obtaining their phone number so that I could phone them afterwards.

In one case I simply phoned the largest public sector trade union "Kommuneforbundet" (and the largest trade union federation in the country: "Fagforbundet") and asked for an interview. I felt this could prove important not least

because of the traditions of cooperation and solidarity (“faglig/ politisk samarbeid”) which have existed between the public sector trade unions and the Labour Party.

The responses I got when phoning people were pleasantly positive. Everybody was willing to allow themselves to be interviewed and nobody saw this as a problem. Although two of the “rank and file” members of the party were initially concerned that I would maybe not “get so much out of them” and that maybe they were the wrong people to be talking to as concerns the subject matter at hand: however the course of the interviews with both these people immediately showed us that nothing could be further from the truth. They both had a wealth of personal experience as concerns “competitive tendering,” and once they started talking about this they almost couldn’t stop!

## 4.2 Validity

I felt that it was important to write down as much as possible of my general impressions of the interviews, the insights they had given me, and so on, whilst these things were still fresh in my mind. In this way I hoped to glean as much information as possible. So, immediately after each interview, I went straight home and spent several hours rewriting, and working on, the material.

At the same time I wished to make my representation of the interview as valid as possible, that is, as true to the facts as possible, by writing out a proper draft (based on my interview notes) immediately after the interview. I wished to spend some time doing this in order to make the final draft as comprehensive as possible (as I believe this also goes to the issue of validity). I repeated this process after every interview. I have also, in the interests of validity, reproduced interview texts, as well as other material, in their original language.

However, perhaps the most important aspect of validity as far as my research was concerned is that when employing the methods of emotionalism one has to be aware of the fact that one can exercise a strong influence on the respondent: using a conversational style when conducting the interview one can all too easily fall into the trap of asking “leading questions” (I would argue that this is, in fact, inevitable to some extent), thus eliciting the answers one wants to hear. As Thagaard writes: **“Forskeren må vurdere om den informasjonen informanten gir, kan være styrt av deres opplevelse av forskeren. I intervju situasjoner må forskeren vurdere om informanten ledes til å svare det hun eller han tror forskeren vil høre”** (Thagaard 1998: 180).

Also, the fact that I obtained access to the field through friends and acquaintances could also, of course, create a considerable bias. In as much as these people belonged to the same social networks as I myself had, at one time or another, belonged to, one could, perhaps, reasonably expect our views on these subjects to be somewhat similar, and that I would simply find corroboration of “the answers I was looking for.”

I tried to limit the amount of such bias by purposely finding people, through other people, whom I had never met with, or spoken to, on any previous occasion, and whom, hopefully, had never even heard of me before: I was simply a student of sociology doing research on the Labour Party who happened to have contacts in these networks. The only interview subject I actually had met before, I worked with him politically, was a party bureaucrat, worked in the private sector, and certainly was not afraid of expressing plenty of views which were in direct contrast to my own!

#### **4.3 People time and place**

**1.** Interview subject: man. around 40 years old. Works for a consultancy firm. Has been a member of the party for about 20 years. As mentioned earlier, he has also been part of the leadership of the party in Oslo for around 20 years, and a political advisor to the Department of Finance.

The interview was conducted at his place of work at 10 a.m. It lasted one hour and 10 minutes. The interview subject did most of the talking: he didn't need that many questions. I got the distinct impression that he felt he had some important opinions on the subjects at hand. Also that he felt that these opinions should be heard, and that he was used to people listening to him.

On the way to the interview (trying to find his place of work), at the reception desk in his consultancy firm, sitting in the waiting room reading financial newspapers (the only reading matter available), and until we got started on the interview, I felt somewhat intimidated. I do not usually frequent such "distinguished" places of work in such "upper class" areas.

Nonetheless I felt that the interview went really well: I felt that I gained valuable insights which otherwise would have proven difficult to come by. Afterwards I went home and spent 8 hours analysing the data and writing out my final draft of the interview.

**2.** Interview subject: woman. Long-standing trade union activist (LO sentral: Oslo). Member of the party for around 40 years : "sånn som gubbene." Has been member of her local county council (BU). Has recently become a pensioner.

Interviewed her 5 p.m. over coffee and cakes at her home. I felt quite shy on the way to her house, but once I got there she made me feel quite at home and the interview took place in an atmosphere of congeniality. The interview lasted 2 hours, and I left feeling that she had imparted to me a sense of community, and almost "of belonging." She expressed (several times) her feelings of being without (savn), and missing someone to talk to about these things. She wanted me to check with the union (Fagforbundet) about workers rights in the place of work she had been involved with which had been subject to competitive tendering ("konkurranseutsatt").

I went home and spent 6 hours re-reading my interview material and writing my final draft.

**3. Interview subject: woman. Around 35 years old. Member of the party since 1991. Has been a deputy councillor (BU) for a period of 3 years.**

The interview was conducted at her place of work, at 2 p.m. It lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes. I felt especially shy on my way there as this was my first interview, but the atmosphere was informal, and I soon felt at home. In this interview I used the whole interview guide, but at the same time we chatted informally around a range of topics.

At one point there was an attempt to partially privatize her workplace, but there were protests, and it was stopped. The protests were largely organised not by the party or the union, but by people who worked in, and used the facilities, and who felt they had an interest in keeping things the way they were. She was angry at privatisation and competitive tendering and spoke of the need for a Labour Party which was willing to do more in order to fight for peoples rights. A more militant Labour Party, she said, would gain widespread support: “Hele Groruddalen er forbanna.”

Afterwards I went home and reread the interview several times, making a note of particular themes I wished to follow up later, and writing a final draft. This took me about 8 hours.

**4. Man. Around 40 years old. Member of the party for about 20 years. Never held any positions of responsibility in, or on behalf of, the party. Works in a state- owned company which has been partially privatised.**

I interviewed him on a Saturday afternoon in a cafe (12 a.m.) and the interview lasted 2 hours. I felt completely relaxed both before and during the interview, perhaps because we were on neutral ground (the cafe). We talked freely. He was very talkative: he “had a lot on his heart.” He was very critical of privatisation and showed some disillusionment with the Labour Party.

Afterwards I went home and spent about 7 hours working on the data.

**5. Woman. 35. Joined the party in 1992. Not been particularly active: a “passive” member. Interview took place in a cafe at 5 p.m. (after work). Works in an old peoples home. There was an element of stress throughout this interview as the subject turned up late and had to leave within the hour to relieve the babysitter. The interview lasted 50 minutes.**

She also showed some disillusionment with the party as concerns the conceived lack of protection of the welfare state and their ambivalent attitude towards privatisation and “competitive tendering.” She also talked a lot about the union (fagforbundet) and how she felt that they “looked good on paper,” but that they should do more.

After this interview I spent 5 hours working on the data.

**6. Woman. 40+. Trade union activist. Member of the Labour Party.** Interview took place in a cafe at 5 p.m. (after work). Again, during this interview I was on neutral territory, so I felt completely comfortable all the way through.

She was very concerned with pointing out that privatisation and competitive tendering were really right wing politics (“Høyrepolitikk”). Also, that to privatise and to subject to competitive tender (“konkurranseutsette”) does not make services cheaper, but, on the contrary, quite a lot more expensive. Also, that council workers could be more efficient in their jobs within a framework of continued public ownership, and that this would, in fact, be beneficial to all concerned.

The interview lasted 1 hour. Afterwards I went home and spent 4 hours working on the data.

#### **4.4 Initial impressions**

My initial impressions of the interview material seemed to suggest at least four things:

1. A reasonably high level of social awareness amongst Labour Party members. At least in terms of understanding the perceived need for solidarity in the local community or the workplace. Or, in the case of the one interview, in terms of political arguments for why the most important thing in terms of a decent level of welfare is good leadership in the workplace, or in the local council.

2. At the same time, attitudes, opinions, and theories concerning privatisation and “competitive tendering” were somewhat vague and unclear. I even said to the interviewee who has been part of the central leadership of the party in Oslo that I had been looking for theoretical debate within the party concerning these issues but was unable to find it: he replied that there had been no real debate (“det har bare vært skinndebatt”).

3. Nonetheless, there seemed to be some difference of opinion between the rank and file and the leadership (as I had suspected would be the case).

4. Conducting the interviews seemed to have gone well. At least according to the principles of emotionalism and social constructionism. Although I did not become directly “emotionally involved with respondents” I did, to some extent, convey my own feelings in order to “provide an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication” and I do feel that this allowed me to elicit “authentic accounts of subjective experience” (Silverman 2001: 90, 91). One example of this is the following exchange between myself and the aforementioned party official (PA):

**PA: “Arbeidere i Norge klager for mye. Kona mi har en vennine fra Gambia...og hun klager aldri, vi har det bra i Norge.”**

Myself: **“Man kan se på hjemlandet mitt...det har utviklet seg en voldsom fattigdom de siste femten, tjue år...når jeg tenker på det er jeg glad for at jeg bor i Norge...men, jeg er redd for at den samme utviklingen kan komme også her hvis vi følge den samme politikken som Tony Blair!”**

PA: **“Ja...og det er derfor vi ikke må gjøre det! Vi må få til effektivisering uten å gå i de samme spor som Blair.”**

Another example is the following exchange between myself and one of the grassroots activists (GA):

GA: **“Vi må ha grassrotas synspunkter fram igjen!...For å fange de unge velgere må man skrike!...Folk er forbanna!..Hele Groruddalen er forbanna!”**

Myself: **“Forbanna på hva?”**

GA: **“Forbanna på privatisering, på konkurranseutsetting...på forurensing..på biltrafikk.”**

Myself: **“Som en del av min forskning har jeg vært nede på Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek...der leide jeg en gammel svært/ hvit film hvor du kunne se Martin Tranmæl holde tale på Youngstorget. Han var skikkelige forbanna gjennom hele talen..hviftet med armene og slo i talerstolen..og snakka om nødvendigheten av å slåss..at arbeiderklassen måtte stå samlet og slåss..for å få gjennomført sosialisme. Arbeiderpartiet var kanskje litt mer sånn før?”**

GA: **“Ja! Hvis bare AP tørte å stikke fram nesa si, slå i bordet og hyle høyt: at nå skal noe fæn meg gjøres!”**

#### **4.5 Writing the final draft**

Following Karin Widerberg (2001) I decided to, immediately after I was finished with the interview at hand, both write a summary of the interview, in order to gain insights as to the main issues which had been raised, and to write out the interview, once again, in its entirety (renskrivning) in order to gain as comprehensive a picture of the interview as possible.

#### **Summary**

The summary was written as a general account of the interview concentrating on the main themes and topics which had made themselves relevant during the course of the interview. The summary was intended as an analytical tool enabling me to gain an immediate impression of the main gist of the interview: what had been the most important subjects of discussion for the interviewee? Why was this the case? Did the interview, in this respect, show differences or similarities with other interviews? Why was this the case?

Example of a summary:



**“Torill:” 40 år. Grasrotsaktivist. Lokalpolitiker (BU) (ikke av de mest fremtredende). Kommunen forsøkte å delvis privatisere arbeidsplassen hennes: førte til protester fra brukere og ansatte (demonstrasjonstog ned til Byrådshuset). Planene ble stoppet.**

**Veldig opptatt av lokalmiljøet sitt. Opptatt av felleskap og solidaritet. Vil vise solidaritet med de svakeste: “AP synes pengene plasseres feil”...”de svake burde vært prioritert”...”burde prøve å kutte i administrasjonen i første omgang.”**

**Veldig opptatt av grunnverdier når det gjelder velferdsstaten som må beskyttes, og som må koste penger: “grunnpillarene i et velferdssystem, sånn som helse og politi, må beskyttes og må koste penger...dette er en vanlig holdning blant AP medlemmer.”**

**Har føling med hva “folk flest” i hennes nærmiljø føler og mener om en del viktige politiske saker: “På begynnelsen av 90 tallet: folk så på privatisering som en grei løsning. Men der var det sånn at folk flest hadde mer penger (trodde folk)...”Jappetiden” tankegangen hang igjen hos folk (fra 80 tallet)...AP folk har nå fått øynene oppe for de svake i samfunnet...flere innvandrere har kommet til området og har vanskelig for å få seg jobb...det er flere alenemødre i området...Oslo består nesten bare av alenemødre!....Folk opplever ting på kroppen: enten de eller naboen.”**

**Opptatt av Arbeiderpartiets tradisjoner: “AP har holdt tradisjoner om felleskap levende...tradisjoner som har gått i arv fra far og mor (i hvertfall at barna også stemmer rødt)..det jeg har opplevd av diskusjoner har vært mest av praktisk art: hva som skal gjøres lokalt..en del ideologi blant Ap folk lokalt som går på felleskap...om å beskytte velferden..velferden skal være tilgjengelig for alle..ideologi om sosialpolitikk...skiller seg fra Høyre i at Høyre mener alle må passe seg selv.”**

**Vil ha et Arbeiderparti som bygge på grunnplanets synspunkter. Som er militant, høytlyt og aggressiv: “Det holder ikke lenger med det nettverket som har vært...må ha grasrotas synspunkter fram igjen!..Vi lykkes lokalt p.g.a. at vi hører på grasrota..bør snakke om at vi vil ha solidaritet med de fattige..Ap bør snakke om å kjempe for rettigheter igjen sånn som Kristin Halvorsen..ikke vær for fornuftig: for å fange de unge må man skrike!..Folk er forbanna!..Hele Groruddalen er forbanna..på privatisering, på konkurranseutsetting, på forurensing og biltraffikk..hvis bare Arbeiderpartiet tørte å stikke fram nesa si, slå i bordet, og hyle høyt: at nå skal noe fæn meg gjøres...vi må vekk fra “vi er alle middelklasse nå” type tankegang: Arbeiderpartiet må gjennoppdage arbeiderklassen.”**

**General impression**

In addition to the summary I, rather painstakingly, rewrote the entire interview, word for word, trying to make sure that I did not miss anything. Rewriting the entire interview also gave me the possibility of writing notes and comments in the margin: for example; how many times the word “felleskap” was used, or how often the theme of solidarity was raised, or attitudes of solidarity were displayed.

**“Det er med andre ord to ulike typer tekster, der sammendraget utgjør en fortolkning av det som forskeren husker og som framstår som viktig i intervjuet. Og som en tolket og bearbeidet tekst er den et viktig komplement til den rene intervjuutskriften. Ikke minst fordi den gjør det lettere for forskeren å holde bildet av intervjupersonen levende i hukommelsen” (Widerberg 2001: 102).**

## 5. Results

What sort of party is the Labour Party supposed to be? What are they to achieve? And how does this fit into the scheme of things as far as privatisation and competitive tendering are concerned?

A few words from Einar Gerhardsens well known “handbook” for the movement, “Tillitsmannen,” might serve as a starting point here: **“For de valgte representanter vil det være betryggende at de til enhver tid opptrer i samsvar med partiets og partimedlemmenes oppfatning. De er valgt inn i kommunale verv som representanter for et bestemt politisk syn, for en sosialistisk arbeiderbevegelse, og i hele sin virksomhet skal de ha dette for øye” (Gerhardsen 1989: 20), and: “Agitasjon: Dersom arbeiderbevegelsen skal kunne løse de store og viktige oppgavene, må den være sterk og samlet. Mange av dem som høre hjemme i bevegelsen, står ennå utenfor. De som hører hjemme der, er de “håndens og åndens arbeidere” som har et sosialistisk grunnsyn, og som vil være med og støtte arbeidet for et sosialistisk samfunn” (Gerhardsen 1989: 72).**

Here is clear evidence of very strong sets of socialist norms of behaviour presumably, at least partly, based on equally strong sets of ethical socialist values. Questions remain, however, as to what effect competitive tendering may have on such norms and values, and what sort of processes of social interaction this may produce. In search of the answers to these questions let us turn to the rest of our results.

### 5.1 Labour party documents

I have chosen to reproduce extracts of those texts which I consider the most important (of those which I have found) for our analysis. Some of these extracts are rather long. This is because I consider them so important to our analysis that I find it difficult not to reproduce them at such length.

I consider them important because I think they show ideological, theoretical, and practical tendencies which point in several different directions. They also show a certain change of tone as concerns privatisation.

Further analysis of these texts will follow in subsequent chapters.

Thorbjørn Jaglands speech at the annual conference 1989: **“...offentlige tjenester som har vokst enormt. Utviklingen i årene framover vil gå enda raskere. Den nye industrielle revolusjonen, som vi er midt inne i, gir kapitalismen en helt ny vitalitet og fører til omfattende endringer i arbeidslivet. Omstillingen i de industrialiserte landene er ikke skapt av den nye og aggressive høyresiden.....**

**Høyresiden høster bare fruktene av forandringene i næringslivet. Den nye industrien og den private tjenestesektoren vokser med rekordfart. Og den skaper store fortjenester som så pløyes inn i annen servicevirksomhet der også sysselsettingen øker raskt”** (Jagland 1989: 185).

Also later:

**“vi vil ikke tilbake til den situasjonen at grunnleggende menneskelige behov er prisgitt markedet. Derfor må vi forsvare en sterk offentlig sektor som må bygge på noe mer enn effektivitet og penger. Den må bygge på omsorg, kvalitet og varme.**

**Men vi må også ha med oss den tredje innsikten som jeg hadde tenkt å nevne, nemlig den til Karl Marx om at når teknologien endrer seg, blir ikke lenger de gamle eiendomsforhold og de gamle måter å organisere arbeids og samfunnsliv på hensiktsmessige.**

**Den som vil drive velferdspolitikken må ha evne til å gjøre reformer når samfunnsforholdene endrer seg.....Vi er midt inne i en informasjonsrevolusjon. Den preges av nettverksbygging, desentralisering og flate organisasjoner. Og fremfor alt av internasjonalisering.....**

**Derfor måtte statsbedriftene få en friere stilling. For at de skulle bli i stand til å konkurrere i et åpent internasjonalt marked. Jeg vil påstå at hvis vi ikke hadde lagt om fra å være et forvaltningsselskap styrt av Stortinget til å bli et aksjeselskap hadde vi ikke hatt Telenor i dag. Nå er Telenor vårt viktigste teknologiselskap. Vi må gå videre til hele den offentlige forvaltning (my italics)....det er nødvendig med en sterk desentralisering til kommunene. Staten må avreguleres. Vi må få slutt på detaljregulering og kontroll.....**

**Vi lever ikke bare i en informasjonsrevolusjon. Vi er også inn i en bioteknologisk revolusjon. Derfor må vi endre eierform og organisasjonsmodell for sykehusene.**

**Sykehusene er moderne informasjonsbedrifter. De må få en friere stilling. Som andre statsbedrifter. (Jagland 2000: 23, 24, 25).**

Taken from the Labour Party pamphlet, “Together” (“Sammen”), which was written as a guide to candidates and election campaigners (“valgkampmedarbeidere”) in the last local elections (“kommunevalg”) in 2003:

**“Arbeiderpartiet har kraft og vilje til å føre en helhetlig sosialdemokratisk politikk og evne til å forene enkeltmenneskets behov med felleskapets beste.**

**Det handler om at hvert enkelt mennesker skal få muligheten til å virkeliggjøre sine drømmer om et godt liv - sammen med andre.....**

**Det er en grunnleggende ideologisk forskjell mellom sosialdemokratiet og høyresiden i synet på felleskapet.....**

**To samfunnssyn: Regjeringens politiske linjer bryter systematisk med de grunnleggende verdier som har preget politikken som har vært ført til nå. Markedsmakt og pengemakt får stadig større innflytelse. Hensikten er systematisk endring av strukturer i samfunnet mot mer konkurranse og marked, mer privatisering, et tøffere arbeidsliv og mindre felleskapsløsninger.....**

Amongst the “most important examples” they cite the following:

**Privatisering, kommersialisering og konkurranseutsetting av eldreomsorgen**

And they finish off with:

**Arbeiderpartiet vil i stedet ha et samfunn hvor alle mennesker har samme muligheter. Det skapes av folk sammen. Det sikres gjennom felleskapsløsninger. Og det forutsetter vilje til politisk styring”**  
**(Arbeiderpartiet 2003: 5, 6, 8).**

Taken from the Labour Party programme:

**“Antallet uførepensjonister vokser sterkt. Det samme gjør utbetalingene til sykelønn. Om noen år vil andel alderspensjonister øke og dermed også utgiftene til pensjoner. Samtidig øker behovet for eldreomsorg. Forskning og teknologi skaper stadig nye muligheter til å kurere sykdom. Alt dette skal betales.....Fornyelse må til for å opprettholde og utvikle velferden økonomisk..-og kvalitativt. Gjennom fornyelse kan vi også i framtida bevare velferdsløsninger som er for alle, og som bidrar til utjamning av levekår.**

**Utfordringen er å omorganisere og fornye slik at kvaliteten øker. Da må mindre ressurser brukes til administrasjon og kontroll, og mer ressurser brukes til tjenester” (Arbeiderpartiets program 2001-2004: 11).**

And again:

**“Arbeiderpartiet er i mot privatisering fordi det innebærer at det offentlige fraskriver seg ansvaret for at alle får et likt tilbud. For Arbeiderpartiet er det avgjørende at kommunene ikke organisere seg bort fra styring og kontroll over velferden...**

**Det viktigste verktøyet for å utføre en tjeneste best mulig og kostnadseffektivt er ikke konkurranseutsetting og privatisering, men satsing på egne ansatte gjennom motivasjon, skolering, tillit og rammebetingelser....Med dette som grunnlag må en sterk offentlig sektor fortsatt kunne gjøre bruk av frivillige og private tjenester som et tillegg. Arbeiderpartiet har alltid vært opptatt av samarbeid med frivillige, humanitære og private aktører på en rekke områder. Slik vil vi også i framtida arbeide for en mest mulig effektiv ressursutnyttelse” (Arbeiderpartiets program 2001-2004: 29).**

## **5.2 Newspapers**

Here I present some of the most relevant newspaper reports I found, in chronological order. All but one are taken from “Dagsavisen,” a national newspaper which also has its roots in the labour movement.

26. august 2003: **“Norske velgere er stadig mer negative til privatisering av helse- og omsorgs- tjenester i kommunene. Siden 2000 er antall velgere som tror tjenestene blir dårligere med private aktører, blitt fordoblet.”**

Also, (pages 10 and 11): **“Fakta: Siden 2000 er skepsisen til private helse- og omsorgstjenester fordoblet. I dag mener hele 33 prosent at helse- og omsorgstjenester vil bli dårligere med private drivere. I 2000 var tilsværende tall 16 prosent av befolkningen og 14 i 1998. Tallene fra 2003 viser at 38 prosent tror at kvaliteten på tjenestene vil bli omtrent det samme som i dag, selv om tjenestene privatiseres. 21 prosent tror at tjenestene vil bli bedre. 8 prosent er ikke sikker.**

**Blant dagens velgere er det høyest andel av SVs og APs velgere som tror tjenestene blir dårligere ved privatisering, mens Høyre har færrest skeptiske velgere...**

**.... Det viser en undersøkelse Opinionen har gjennomført på oppdrag fra Landsorganisasjonen, LO.**

**- Dette er jeg glad for, sier LO leder Gerd Liv Valla, og mener fagbevegelsen står på trygg grunn når den advarer mot “høyresidens privatiseringsråkjør”.**

**- Folk ser at privatisering ikke gir bedre, men dårligere velferdstjenester, sier Valla i en kommentar til Dagsavisen...”**

4. september 2003 (pages 10 and 11): **“Nå har de ansatte i Oslo Sporveier, et selskap byrådet har varslet kan komme til å bli privatisert, regnet ut hva deres ansatte vil tape dersom en privat operatør overta driften av kollektivnettet i hovedstaden.**

**- En som vasker vogner om natten vil i løpet av 30 år i jobben og 20 år som pensjonist tape 2,75 millioner kroner. Årsaken er at tarriffavtalene til de private firmaene er vesentlig dårligere enn lønnsavtalene vi har i Sporveien, sier Stein Gulbrandsen i Sporveienes arbeiderforening.**

**For en T-banefører med 30 år igjen av yrkeskarrieren og 20 år som pensjonist vil tapet være 1,7 millioner kroner....**

**.... Forsker Hanne Bogen ved Forskningsstiftelsen FAFO mener også at de sporveisansatte har grunn til å bekymre seg ved en eventuell privatisering....dersom det er lavt utdannet og lavt lønnet personell som konkurranseutsettes, er risikoen større for at disse yrkesgruppene kommer over i tarriffområder som er lavere lønnet enn dem de er ifra før, sier Bogen.”**

The front page of “Dagsavisen,” 24. september 2003:

**“Privat kraftsektor øker sårbarheten: Kåre Willoch, som ledet det såkalte Sårbarhetsutvalget, mener privatiseringen av kraftsektoren øker risikoen for massive strømbrudd. Han føler seg ikke trygg på at Norge klarer å unngå enn slik kollaps som i går slo ut store deler av Danmark og Sverige.”**

Also, (page 14): **“ASYMMETRI: “Willoch peker på at en bedrift isolert sett og samfunnet samlet sett vurdere lønnsomhet på to helt forskjellige måter. Det som kan være lønnsomt for en enkelt bedrift, kan samtidig være svært ulønnsomt for samfunnet.**

**For eksempel vil det være lønnsomt for en kraftleverandør ikke å bruke store summer på å vedlikeholde og oppgradere sitt ledningsnett. Men det vil ikke lønne seg for samfunnet å tenke slik, fordi det øker risikoen for massive strømbrudd, og det blir fort en dyr affære for AS Norge.**

**Denne asymmetrien mellom hva som er samfunnsøkonomisk lønnsomt og hva som er bedrifts- økonomisk lønnsomt må utlignes, mener Willoch.**

**- Slik det er i dag, vil kraftleverandøren ved et strømbrudd lide et begrenset tap, mens samfunnets tap vil være enormt.”**

Letter to “Dagsavisen,” 5. oktober 2003 (page 44): **“Privatiseringens pris: - Det er ikke interessant om de ansatte er fornøyd. Uttalelsen kom fra lederen i Kristelig Folkeparti, Valgerd Svarstad Haugland, i valgkampen da temaet privatisering og konkurranseutsetting av offentlige velferdsoppgaver ble debattert på ett av NRKs folkemøter.. ...Velgerne satt igjen med inntrykket:- Det er ikke så farlig med de offentlige ansatte- for høyresiden er det private næringslivs beste venn. Her dreier**

det seg om profitt enten det handler om omsorg eller andre kommunale velferdsoppgaver. mennesker er blitt en vare det skal tjenes penger på.

AP har opp gjennom årene kjempet fram rettigheter som alle arbeidstakere i vårt land nyter godt av, det være seg ferieloven, sykelønnsordningen, bedriftsdemokrati, og arbeidsmiljøloven. Dessverre kommer det stadig flere meldinger fra Fagforbundet og andre forbund om arbeidstakere som ikke lenger har tariffavtaler, gruppelivsforsikring, mister sine pensjonsrettigheter ved privatisering og som har uklare overtidssordninger....

...Arbeiderpartiet ønsker også å fornye offentlig sektor til beste for brukerne, men for oss er det viktig at det skjer ved satsing på felleskapsløsninger og i samarbeid med de ansatte.” - Eirin Faldat, stortingsrepresentant (AP).

Front page headline (“Dagsavisen”) 17. oktober 2003:

**“OECD- rapport slår beina under Høyres fanesak: Privatisering er blitt umoderne: Høyre gikk til valg på slagordet “Mer igjen for pengene”. Nå viser en OECD- undersøkelse at konkurranseutsetting av tjenester og fristilling av offentlige virksomheter er dårlig butikk.**

OECDs konklusjon er klar: Ingen av landene som er analysert satser lenger på fristilling. Privatiseringen har ført til byråkratisk, mindre effektiv og mer uoversiktlig virksomhet.”

Also page 8: “De fleste landene som er med i OECDs undersøkelse har høstet de samme negative erfaringene med konkurranseutsetting av tjenester og fristilling av offentlige virksomheter.

**Denne politikken er blitt: Byråkratisk. Ineffektiv. Udemokratisk.**

- Norge er kommet ti år etter med konkurranseutsetting og fristilling. Andre land rydder nå opp i sine privatiseringstabber, og går i motsatt retning, sier Noralv Veggeland, professor i statsvitenskap ved Høgskolen i Lillehammer. Han.....har studert OECDs rapport “Distributed Public Governance.” Sverige, Tyskland, Frankrike, Storbritannia, Nederland og Spania er med i analysen som spenner fra 80 tallet til i dag.....

....Det kan koste Norge dyrt hvis vi gjentar andre lands feil. Veggeland mener analysen fra OECD, som vanligvis er en svært markedsvennlig organisasjon, bør tas svært alvorlig av regjeringen.

- Norge må følge med i timen. Vi kan få et stort konkurranseproblem hvis vi fortsetter en politikk som andre land har kassert som ineffektiv, og er på vei bort fra, sier Veggeland.”

“Dagsavisen,” 29. mars 2004 (page 6):

**“APs sosialpolitiske talsmann tar selvkritikk på APs vegne etter blant annet en rekke forskningsrapporter nå slår fast at effektivisering og omorganisering av virksomheter er en helt sentral årsak til økende langtids- sykemelding.**

**Da Jens Stoltenberg ble statsminister i 2000, lanserte han “modernisering av offentlig sektor” som regjeringens store prosjekt. Det handlet blant annet om omstilling og effektivisering...**

**..... Thorbjørn Jagland gikk i 1998 inn for privatisering av omsorgstjenester og varslet på landsmøtet “en ny balanse mellom stat og marked på alle plan”....**

**...APs sosialpolitisk talsmann Bjarne Håkon Hansson innrømmer nå at Stoltenbergs prosjekt ikke samsvarer med ønsket om å senke sykefraværet.**

**- Det norske Arbeiderpartiets forhistorie gjør at jeg ikke er egnet til å kritisere omstillinger og effektivisering, svarer han når Dagsavisen vil snakke om rapportene som viser at omstillinger gir sykefravær.**

**Sist ute er en svensk rapport som avdekker at offentlig ansatte som er blitt gjenstand for slik modernisering blir så urolige av prosessen at svært mange sykmeldes over lang tid. Rapporten er interessant også her i Norge - ikke minst fordi det her til lands er langtids- sykefraværet som øker, ikke korttidssykefraværet....**

**.....- Det er ikke riktig å si at dette ensidig har skjedd etter at Erna Solberg og Victor Norman kom til makten. Vi har heller ikke vært gode nok. Vi politikere må tenke gjennom effektene av våre kutt i offentlig sektor. Det som kan være bedriftsøkonomisk lønnsomt på ett budsjett eller i en virksomhet, er ikke alltid samfunnsøkonomisk lønnsomt, sier Hansson.”**

**“Dagsavisen,” 29. mars 2004 (page 6):**

**“Fagforbundets nestleder Tove Stangnes trekker fram sykehusreformen som en av AP- reformene som har skapt mye usikkerhet og økt sykefravær.**

**Nestlederen for 300.000 fagorganiserte er glad for at Bjarne Håkon Hansson tar selvkritikk på APs omstillinger. Men hun skulle ønske partiet hadde snudd før den statlige overtakelsen av sykehusene.....**

**..... Hun mener Arbeiderpartiet har vært veldig opptatt av å effektivisere.**

**- Det var i en periode ikke så lett å tyde hva de mente om konkurranseutsetting, sier hun.”**

**The housing association newspaper, “OBOS Bladet,” no. 5, June 2004 (pages 24 and 25):**

**“Bolig er altfor viktig til å overlate til markedet alene. Vi kan ikke sammenligne bolig med en hvilken som helst annen salgsvare. Vi trenger felleskapsløsninger, sier Stoltenberg.....**



**Stoltenberg mener prispresset på boliger bare kan dempes ved å holde en jevnt høy boligbygging- For å få til dette skal Husbanken få økte rammer. Arbeiderpartiets stortingsgruppe har fremmet forslag om å premiere kommuner som bygger boliger utover et minstenivå.....De har også fremmet forslag om gunstig lånefinansiering til kommuner som kjøper tomter til boligformål. I tillegg ønsker de at staten i særlige tilfeller kan selge tomter til under markedspris.”**

## **5.4 Interviews**

Abbreviations:

PO: Party Official

PM: Passive Member

GA: Grassroots Activist

TUA: Trade union activist

MS: Myself

Extracts from interviews:

**PO: “Jeg har litt redsel for Kommuneforbundets innflytelse. Jeg er opptatt av at brukerne skal få best mulig tilbud..vil ikke ta for mye hensyn til Kommuneforbundet. Per i dag er det sånn at det finnes en samarbeidsavtale mellom Kommuneforbundet og Arbeiderpartiet. Kommuneforbundet kan møte på gruppemøte i Arbeiderpartiets styringsgruppe....Jeg synes vi bør samarbeide med både Høyre og Fremskrittspartiet.”**

**MS: “Hva med “det faglige/ politiske samarbeide”? Er du i mot at AP skal samarbeide med fagforeningene? Vil du gjøre sånn som Tony Blair har gjort i Storbritannia: å løsrive Arbeiderpartiet fullstendig fra fagforeningene?”**

**PO: “Det er historisk riktig å ha et godt samarbeid med LO, men ikke detaljstyrt i forhold til en fagforening: hvis det er en barnehagesak-bør samarbeide med førskolelærerne osv. Folk (f.eks: Frp) sier at det som er viktig for Arbeiderpartiet er de ansatte (f.eks. Kommuneforbundet). Jeg er opptatt av at brukerne skal få et best mulig tilbud....**

**...Det er ingen i Arbeiderpartiet som har vært pådriver for konkurranseutsetting, men samtidig har ikke folk syntes at det har vært så farlig heller. Men, så kommer erfaringene... Mange har fått bevis på (inkludert meg selv) at det, i hvertfall, blir ikke noe bedre...**

**...Det er reellt sett et verdivalg...jeg tror ikke der er noe god ide å konkurranseutsette sykehus...men det er ikke noe rasering av velferdsstaten sånn som folk snakker om..det er ikke noe rasering av tilbud til brukerne...men det blir ikke bedre med konkurranseutsetting heller...**

**...Det er folk som vil si at jeg er en jævla høyreavikker fordi jeg er også opptatt av brukerne, men Arbeiderpartiet er ofte mest opptatt av de ansatte. Jeg vil tippe skåla mot at AP sette brukere i fokus (uten at det nødvendigvis betyr konkurranseutsetting av den grunn)....**

**...ofte et spørsmål om at ny ledelse må til..for å få til en omorganisering som betyr mer effektiv drift: mer kostnadseffektiv og bedre for brukerne..også dårlige ting med kommunal drift..med bedre ledelse (lederskifte) i bydelen, i sykehjem, i barnehage, kan man spare på økonomi og få mer fornøyde ansatte.**

**....Du finner både kommunale og private sykehjem og barnehage som er både dårlig og bra. Det er de ansatte selv som bidrar til å skape usikkerhet, de klager for mye, jeg skjønner at de gjør det, men hvor reellt det er....vi hadde en sak i nærmiljøet mitt: en barnehage som skulle effektiviseres for å spare penger. FAU, påvirket av de ansatte, gikk i mot og stoppet det. Det viser at fagforeningene har makt, det er bra, men! Politikere må ofte ta upopulære beslutninger.”**

**MS: “Konkurranseutsetting, eller privatisering, betyr b.l.a. at man prøve å gjøre ting mer “kostnadseffektiv,” men dette betyr ofte at man prøve å kutte i lønn til de ansatte, eller i ansettelsesforhold...”**

**PO: “Det er ikke noe annet sted å spare penger!”**

**MS: “Har du vært bort i noe analyse av verdensøkonomien som sier at Norge må effektivisere for å bli mer konkurransedyktig?”**

**PO: “Jeg vet i hvertfall at det brukes mer og mer penger på velferd hvert år. Sånn som denne debatten om pensjoner: det kommer ikke fram at det brukes mer og mer penger på velferd. Vi må prøve å spare penger...men det skjæres ikke ned...klare å spare litt på utgiftsposter..må spare et sted.....i Oslo brukes det 100 millioner mer på kollektiv tilbud og trafikktiltak per år...**

**....Det er et pedagogisk problem å forklare folk at Norge er verdens beste land å bo i. Vi har det bra og vi har ikke råd til alt...og vi bruker stadig mer penger!”**

**MS: “Det var 60 000 mennesker som demonstrerte i Ålesund nylig, til forsvar for sitt lokalsykehus, og det er stadig leger i nyhetene som klager over at det er ikke lenger mulig å gi pasienter et fullverdig tilbud, så det må være noen områder hvor sykehusene ikke lenger har kapasitet nok, tror du ikke det?”**

**PO: “Ja, men vi har aldri hatt så mye folk på sykehus heller.”  
.....”Det er et faktum at Arbeiderpartiet har mye støtte blant offentlig ansatte. Jeg tror mange industiarbeidere nå stemmer på Fremskrittspartiet.”**

**MS: “Har du noe personlig erfaring med privatisering eller konkurranseutsetting?”**

**GA/ TUA: “Jeg er forbanna! Jeg har vært med i et tilsynsutvalg som skulle se på hvordan det hadde gått med konkurranseutsetting av et lokalt sykehjem. Det**

kom en ny leder, som var midlertidig ansatt for å se på hvordan ting kunne gjøres bedre, dvs. billigere, mer kostnadseffektiv. Hun nye lederen var midlertidig ansatt, men ansettelsen ble bare forlenget og forlenget....de ansatte fant ut til slutt, gjennom media, at sykehjemmet var konkurranseutsatt! Det hadde blitt overtatt av "Kommunal Konkurranse."

...flere av oss som var i mot konkurranseutsetting: sykehjemmet drev så godt de kunne. Det var alltid mangel på penger, og mye sykefravær....Det finnes noe reglement for kommunal drift (vedtatt mars 2002) hvor det står at det skal være "forsvarlige personalforhold," ....det var alltid høyt sykefravær....veldig mye snakk om å få til en vikarpul, med folk som kjente til sykehjemmet, ble aldri noe av...uungåelig at sykefravær skulle gå utover beboerne...de ansatte var stressa, fikk ryggproblemer og nakkesmerter, dårlige nerver, søvnløshet og dårlig samvittighet for ikke å strekke til. Det var mye gjennomgang av personalet: vi merka at hvor lenge folk holdt ut i jobben hang sammen med hvor mye arbeidsløshet det var.....det var mange studenter, kvinner og innvandrere som jobba der...Tilsynsutvalget pekte på at Kommunen måtte gjøre noe i forhold til innvandrere og norsk kunnskaper, f.eks: kurs....

.... Å så kom da denne dama som skulle forandre på en del ting....skulle gjøre sykehjemmet mer "attraktivt" og "konkurransedyktig" .....mye elendig som burde vært reparert....inn i blant dette her...nå skulle de bruke enda mindre penger på sykehjemmet!.....

.....det er de ansatte som koster penger.....skulle kutte ut alle hjelpepleiere: ansette assistenter.....de ansatte er veldig bitre...og er redd for å bli overtallige.....vi burde kunne vise solidaritet med de ansatte synes jeg: gjøre noe for å ivareta deres interesser opp i det hele.....fagforeningen burde gjøre mer."

MS: "Jeg har selv vært plasstillitsvalgt for Kommuneforbundet. Jeg vet at det er ikke bare å skalte og valte med ansettelsesforhold: det finnes noe som heter stillingsvern, og det finnes noe som heter "medbestemmelsesrett" hvor de ansatte skal bli tatt med som en del av en omorganiseringssprosess, gjennom deres valgte representanter: de ansatte skal faktisk har noe de skal ha sagt i en sånn prosess."

GA/ TUA: "Kanskje ikke når du skifte eier"

.....MS: "Bruker AP fortsatt begrepet sosialisme? Har du vært bort i diskusjoner om sosialisme i AP?"

GA/ TUA: "Hvis du lese prinsipp-programmet til LO, i hvertfall Kommuneforbundet, så stå det at man skal jobbe for et sosialistisk samfunn....lokallaget har diskutert sosialisme, vi har en ideologisk forankring i sosialisme

....man må fortsette å jobbe for sosialisme, man er aldri ved målet. Vi vil i hvertfall ha politisk styring av offentlig sektor.

**MS: “Arbeiderpartiet og fagforeningen (Fagforbundet) gikk sammen om å gå sterkt ut mot privatisering under forrige kommunevalg: hvorfor det tror du?”**

**GA/ TAU: “Fordi de har begynt å tenke med hue!”**

**GA: “Kommunene har fått mindre penger de siste årene. Det er blitt flere tjenester, flere brukere...36 millioner i år skal spares i bydelen....**

**....rundt 150 med i lokale AP lag: i hvertfall 3, kanskje 4 lag i bydelen...på åpne medlemsmøter er det mest den gamle garden som møter opp: rundt 30 stikker. Hovedvekten er i alderen 50+...**

**....Røde partier er i flertall i BU, så vi blir syndebukker overfor befolkningen fordi vi må føre politikken til et høyrebyråd...**

**....vi jobber for solidaritet lokalt: BU har satt i gang tiltak for innvandrere. Vi har tre frivillighetssentraler i området som driver kafe og åpent hus hvor folk kan komme innom og få gratis hjelp til å fylle ut skjemaer...**

**...jobbsøknader...hva som helst. Dette fungerer bra integreringsmessig...det bidrar til felleskap. Det er to faste ansatte på hver av sentralene: en daglig leder + en assistent, og mange årsverk gjort av frivillige. Sentralene brukes av rullestolbrukere, innvandrere og folk som har problemer med å fungere i samfunnet i det hele tatt....**

**....Innad i partiet er det den gamle garden som holder på sitt: problemer med å få med ungdom som ikke vil bare høre på gamle arbeidersanger...et par, tre aktive rundt 30 års alderen...de fleste yngre ser på SV som friskere....dette går på ikke så gjennomtenkte holdninger....Kristin Halvorsen virker frisk og kampvillig: slår i bordet: prate til folk på grasrota: det gjør AP og, men på en tam måte.....burde vist mer solidaritet med de svakeste.....**

**....AP trenger en frontfigur som sier “Nå må vi gå og sette oss ned i veien!” Ap kunne vinne på dette....**

**...vi hadde en sak her oppe for 10 år siden. En vei ble lagt i tunnel og det ble en del skader på hus i området. Vi hadde en fyr i Ap som slåss for at folk skulle få erstatning: Han slo i bordet og sa “Nå skal vi slåss for rettighetene våres!” Han er fortsatt lokalt: folk hører på han fortsatt når det gjelder andre saker.”**

**..... MS: “Hva synes du om neste Stortingsvalg, det virker kanskje som om Stoltenberg mener at EU medlemskap er viktigere enn å få til en venstre/ sentrum allianse for å bli kvitt høyresiden?”**

**GA: “Det er ikke alle som er enig i at Stoltenberg er den rette mannen for jobben når det gjelder å være leder for Arbeiderpartiet.”**

**..... GA: “Ja, nå har du fått grasrotas perspektiv!”**

**TUA: “Høyre og Fremskrittspartiet vil ha folk til å tro at konkurranseutsetting og privatisering gjør tjenester billigere, mer effektivt, og bedre for brukerne... men sannheten er noe annet....i hvertfall to saker våren 2003: Høyre byrådet forsøkte å selge Hafslund, og de forsøkte å selge Oslo Kinomatografer. Bare disse to sakene her kostet Oslo Kommune nesten 13 millioner kroner. Det er skattebetalernes penger: Oslo innbyggernes penger..... også fra juni 2001 til juni 2002 var Vinderen bo og servicesenter satt ut på anbud, men selskapet NOR, et privat selskap, brøt kontrakten og stoppet driften: Vinderen bydel måtte ta over driften på en ukes varsel og det kostet bydelen 10 millioner kroner!**

**.....vi har ingenting i mot omorganisering i seg selv...våre medlemmer kan jobbe mer effektivt, og de vil jobbe mer effektivt....de vil gjøre en bra jobb, men for å gjøre en bra jobb må de føle seg trygge: det er da folk jobber mest effektivt, når de føler seg trygge og fornøyde. Og, ikke minst, må de ha tillit til arbeidsgiveren: de må kunne stole på arbeidsgiveren....må kunne stole på at arbeidsgiveren skal satse på dem som ansatte..og at arbeidsplassen skal få de ressursene som trengs....holder ikke hvis folk må gå rundt og være redd for å miste jobben hele tida!”**

**..... “Vi trenger en politisk maktskifte. Folk må slutte å stemme på Høyre og Fremskrittspartiet.....**

**.....Kanskje kan Trondheimskampanjen fra LO i forbindelse med valgkampen i fjor bli en mal også for stortingsvalget i 2005... Da var det mye samarbeid mellom LO og partiene på venstresida..de stilte en rekke felles krav.....Jeg vet at LO driver å formulere en rekke krav som partiene på venstresida må ta stilling til også denne gangen, i forhold til stortingsvalget. I Trondheim resulterte valgkampsamarbeidet i at AP og SV gjorde et brakvalg.....dette var en kjempeinspirasjon for alle som var i mot privatisering og økt markedsrett i Trondheim .....En AP/SV/SP regjering etter valget i 2005 er en mulighet. Det er mange som vil ha ikke bare en ny regjering, men en ny politikk”**

**PM: “Siden selskapet ble delvis privatisert tenker ledelsen mer og mer kun på penger.....de har leied ut deler av virksomheten til USA for å spare 100 millioner kroner....mer og mer penger brukes på administrasjon og byråkrati for å passe på de ansatte...passe på at ting blir gjort mer kostnadseffektivt...mindre ressurser går til brukerne.....**

**..... de ansatte blir demoralisert....mister arbeidslysten.**

**..... det virker som om også Arbeiderpartiet tenke kun på at ting skal drives mer kostnadseffektivt og at det må være konkurransedyktig.”**

**PM: “Folk som jobber i offentlig sektor, særlig med omsorgsarbeid, de er slitne nok fra for av. Det siste de trenger å høre er at de må jobbe enda mer, og at det skal brukes kanskje enda mindre penger på arbeidsplassen dems.....**

**.....Fagforeningen sier at de er i mot konkurranseutsetting, men de burde gjøre mer...de burde gjøre noe for å stoppe det...de burde gå til streik!”**

### **5.5 “Ideal types”**

Again, following Karin Widerberg, I would argue that in my interview material I am able to uncover three distinct “Ideal Types,” or **“Theoretical Portraits” (Widerberg 2001: 123).**

Ideal types are collections of the most important themes and issues in the material which one wishes to pursue, portrayed as fictional people. These fictional people are made up of characteristics and attitudes displayed by several of the interview subjects compounded into one “person.” Ideal types can be a useful way of expressing connections, or relationships, in the material: “commonalities,” and differences, as displayed by several different interview subjects all at the same time. Ideal types also have the advantage of contributing to anonymity: **“Ingen og alle kan kjenne seg igjen” (Widerberg 2001: 124).**

The main point however is to construct “abstract” people in order to emphasize the essence of what one finds in the material, and I do happen to think that my 6 interviews do fit rather neatly into 3 separate categories of “theoretical portrait.”

My Ideal Types would be as follows:

1. Party bureaucrat. Thinks in terms of good leadership, and effective management and running of the economy. Does not have much experience of working “on the shop floor” (“på golvet”), or if he does have it, he has forgotten it. Therefore, does not have too much understanding of the working conditions, or quality of service in for example, your average care facility. Is likely to show little sympathy with the plight of public workers and their complaints, but will pay lip service to the need for good quality care in the community.

2. Grassroots activist. In many ways, the backbone of the party. Active at a local level, also often in the workplace, and/ or the trade union. In touch with the “normal” membership of the party, and the electorate. Feels that she has her finger on the pulse of local events, and on local peoples attitudes. Is angry about privatisation and competitive tendering (“konkurranseutsetting”) as she sees these as eating away at the very fabric of local community (“felleskap”) or solidarity.

3. Passive member. Disillusioned, somewhat bitter. Thinks the union wont fight, and the only thing the party cares about is running the economy more efficiently. In the

mean time living and working conditions for working people are getting steadily worse. Feels that somebody should do something about this, but is not sure that anybody will.

I feel that, combined with other material I have uncovered in the Labour Movement Library (such as Gerhardsens “handbook” and Jaglands speeches), these three ideal types illustrate, perhaps, three main “theoretical,” or political, tendencies within the Labour Party. These tendencies can be summed up as follows;

Firstly, we have people in bureaucratic positions of leadership who have a tendency to view society from the top down. They are concerned that, with a growing level of welfare expenditure, we need to run the economy, and not least the public sector, more efficiently: it must become more “cost-effective.” At the same time, these people have little understanding of how working conditions actually are “on the shop floor” of a public sector workplace, and may have little sympathy for workers complaints in the face of the perceived need for restructuring and more rational efficiency (though we do have the one letter from a parliamentary member of the Labour Party who is very concerned about the rights and working conditions of public sector workers).

Secondly, we have local rank and file activists who are still running, at least on a local level, a traditional “workers party” based on long established social democratic values of solidarity, community spirit (“felleskap”), and campaigning for the protection of the weak. Even, perhaps, still based on a traditional socialist ideology (even Jagland still uses Karl Marx in his one speech). Also based on fighting for peoples rights when this is considered necessary. These people want to maintain a traditional workers party, and a traditional welfare state. They can be quite critical of their own party leadership, and very angry about restructuring of the public sector, privatisation, and competitive tendering.

Thirdly, we have party members who are not politically active, and who have, perhaps, no clear “ideology,” or political analysis. These people (who, in terms of our analysis, work in the public sector) are however frustrated over privatisation and competitive tendering. Despite their disillusionment these members would also like to see a workers party, and a trade union, which fights against privatisation/ competitive tendering and worsening working conditions.

My three ideal types, or theoretical portraits, are also examples of what Ragin calls “images,” or constructions of “synthesized evidence.” It remains to be seen if these images fit with the “analytical frames” which are my starting point.

## **5.6 Cases**

### **“Torunn”**

Torunn had been involved in bureaucratic processes for a number of years through her work as a central representative for the largest Norwegian trade union federation "LO." This will, for example, have involved her in a certain level of centralised planning and negotiation throughout the late 1980s and the early 1990s: the years of the so-called "solidarity alternative" ("solidaritetsalternativet"). This involved a definition of "solidarity" raised to the national level whereby workers were strongly encouraged to exercise wage restraint in order to save the bosses extra expenditure. In return, it was said, the money saved would be reinvested in the economy, boosting productivity and reducing unemployment. Solidarity with the unemployed, and with the rest of the nation, plus a certain guarantee against a further growth in unemployment and perhaps the threat of job losses at one's own workplace, was to be achieved through restricting one of the most traditional roles of the trade unions: the fight for higher wages.

However, Torunn's work as a *local* Labour Party activist in recent years, in the council borough ("bydel") and immediate community in which she lives, has given her quite another definition of "solidarity." As a local Labour Party councillor Torunn was part of a group which was given the job of monitoring the effects of competitive tendering at a local old peoples home. As part of this group process of monitoring the process of competitive tendering and trying to make sure it did not have any negative effects upon either working conditions for the employees, or the quality of care for the elderly, Torunn had begun to give the term "solidarity" a whole new definition. A definition which, as she saw it, involved trying to maintain workers rights and a certain level of care in the community despite what she saw as the very negative effects of competitive tendering, whereby a right wing dominated city council was primarily concerned with achieving a more "cost effective" running of the establishment involved. When I asked Torunn if she had any personal experience with competitive tendering she immediately "burst out with" the statement: "I am angry!" (as did Torill in fact!).

Torunn was rediscovering the term solidarity. She had spent a considerable amount of time talking to workers who "were exhausted enough already" and who now faced the onslaught of a programme of competitive tendering designed to save the council money through, amongst other things, squeezing more "productivity" out of the workers. This was to be done partly through terminating previous work contracts, and re-employing people on new contracts with different job descriptions (more work) and less wages. Management (under new leadership) was also rumoured to be planning to cut down on the size of the workforce in order to force the remaining workers to be more "effective." The elderly users of the facility were said to be neglected: the quality of care provided, far from optimal in the first place, was said to be suffering due to the extra workload being forced upon the workers.



The workers complained to Torunn that they already had been suffering from bad backs, pains in the neck, headaches and constant feelings of guilt because they felt that they didn't manage to cope properly with their heavy workloads, in terms of providing an adequate level of care to the elderly. Now the home was suddenly under new management and was to be subjected to competitive tendering. Everything was to become more "cost effective" ("lønnsomt"), that is to say; cheaper. The workers were afraid of the extra workload, afraid of losing their jobs, and concerned about the worsening quality of the services they provided.

For Torunn "solidarity" had now come to mean trying to do something to help save the workers and the users of her local old peoples home from what she saw as a right wing political and economic offensive leading to near catastrophe: "They were running the place as best they could: and then along comes this woman and says that they have to work even harder, and that everything has to be cheaper, and that some people might lose their jobs: it was an impossible situation.....we have to try and show solidarity with the workers and users of the facility." For Torunn solidarity now also meant anger, and a certain sense of powerlessness in the face of bureaucratic, faceless and top heavy organisations which simply refused her pleas for help: be it the local council administration, the city government or the council workers trade union. She even asked me to get in touch with the trade union on behalf of these workers: maybe they would listen to me!

### **"Torill"**

For Torill, on the other hand, the terms "solidarity" and "community" had come to mean empowerment. They had become part of a local "ideology of struggle", and a "humanitarian discourse" (Lopez 2000: 274) which had contributed to the successful blocking of an attempt to partially privatize her workplace. This was clearly a case of the ongoing definition of symbolic terminology through "action." Localized group processes had led to the redefining of the terms "solidarity" and "community" in such a way that these terms truly "came alive:" were interpreted as symbolic elements of local struggles against what was perceived as right wing ideology ("the right wing says that everybody has to look after themselves and that community is irrelevant") and the implementation of what was perceived as right wing policy (privatisation) on behalf of a city council dominated by the parties of the right.

Torill spoke of how local peoples' attitudes had changed from the "yuppie times" of the late 1980s ("jappetiden") to today, through processes of interpretation of collective local experience and social interaction. The late 1980s were a time of extreme individualism. The terms "solidarity" and "community" were seen as largely historic. Solidarity and a sense of community, as viewed chiefly through the eyes of the all pervasive labour movement, which had obtained considerable power in Norway in the

decades after the second world war, had helped to give the Norwegian people a solid economic and social foundation on which to stand in the shape of the welfare state. Added to this was economic prosperity due largely to the discovery of large reserves of oil in Norwegian waters in the 1970s. With the onset of an economic boom between 1983 and 1987 (concentrated mainly in the building trades, the property market and the financial sector) the Norwegian people were said to be more concerned with the pursuit of individual wealth and personal fulfillment, than with any ideas of solidarity or community.

Torill, however, told of how she had experienced local people, in recent years, having had “their eyes opened” (“har fått øynene oppe”) towards some harsh economic realities which show how local “working class people” are struggling to make ends meet, and that their local community is suffering under the effects of “right wing politics.” Torill claimed that local people had been rediscovering a sense of solidarity and community, in terms of local dialogue and discourse, and an “ideology of social politics,” in the face of, and in direct contradiction to, “right wing politics.”

Torill spoke of how high unemployment in the area, and high housing costs had contributed to people feeling that “times were tough.” She said that many immigrants had moved into the area in recent years, and that these people were especially hard hit by unemployment. Also that there had been an increase in the number of single mothers, who also suffered financially. The fact that so many people in the area were suffering from economic problems Torill attributed to right wing politics on behalf of central government (both city and national) which had “no sense of community.”

Not least of all, Torill also told of a local rank and file movement, mobilized by and amongst local people, which had successfully blocked an attempt at partially privatizing her workplace. This was an extremely localized group process, organised through word of mouth and local “peoples meetings” (“folkemøter”) and totally independent of the official trade union, or political parties. These organisations were seen to be bureaucratic and inefficient, and local “rank and file repertoires” (Lopez 2000: 288) were developed based on a growing, collective sense of solidarity in the local community. People felt, more and more strongly over time that this growing sense of localized solidarity and community called for a localized, grassroots response, towards what they had come to see as inhumane right wing policies (privatization), based solely on saving money, or making services cheaper, and involving an attack on their local community in terms of reducing the quality of services this important local institution would be able to provide. Furthermore, it was felt that this grassroots response would have to be based on unorthodox tactics, as the established trade union bureaucracy and political parties were too passive in the face of “the right wing offensive.” The people doing the organizing were local residents, users of the facility, people who worked there, local families and friends. An informal network was built up

specifically for the purpose of fighting the privatisation plans, based on “a local ideology of struggle” on behalf of the community.

They held local meetings and demonstrations, and organized at least one rather large demonstration on the steps of the town hall, lobbying the city council, and receiving media coverage. After a good deal of publicity the privatization plans were scrapped.

### **Kane care workers**

This process was extremely similar to the one described by Steven H. Lopez (2000) in Pittsburgh USA in 1997 whereby public service workers stopped plans to privatize a local public nursing home by largely bypassing official trade union tactics and mobilizing in the local community: **“I argue that the unions campaign against Kane privatization succeeded because it was able to deploy a humanitarian discourse emphasizing the dark side of market efficiency, transforming privatization into a synonym for cutbacks that would needlessly victimize the Kanes` innocent elderly and disabled residents. This union discourse mobilized diverse constituencies against privatization, allowing the union to *bypass* (rather than confront) its organizational legacies” (Lopez 2000: 274).**

Here, also, demonstrations and lobbying of county commissioners were the favoured tactics: **“three days of rallies and marches; noisy crowds of workers descended on the Allegheny County courthouse each day....several dozen workers turned out for each biweekly county commissioners` meeting- to harass the county administration and to use the portion of the meetings designated for “public comment” as a platform to denounce Kane privatization” (Lopez 2000: 280).**

Lopez argues that the campaign to stop privatization was successful not least because they were able to mobilize a “humanitarian discourse” which emphasized “seeing privatization in humanitarian- rather than economic- terms” (Lopez 2000: 279). This humanitarian discourse was able to launch a viable “counterattack” against “neoliberal ideology” (Lopez 2000: 278), counterposing a humanitarian set of ethics to the neoliberal doctrine of “cost efficiency.” They won their fight not least, according to Lopez, because they successfully conveyed the message to the general public that privatization would involve cutbacks which would have a negative effect on the quality of care provided to the elderly, and was therefore inhumane and must be stopped.

## **6. Interpreting the results in terms of “ideal types”**

### **6.1 Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism seems to have had little effect upon the Norwegian Labour Party compared with, for example, the British Labour Party, at least if one sees “Third Way”

rhetoric as essentially bowing to neoliberalism, as many critics do. Perry Anderson argues that Third Way politics and policies under the “New Labour” government of Tony Blair, in Great Britain, simply legitimize, and are a continuation of, the neoliberal policies of the previous right-wing government under Margaret Thatcher, and later, John Major: **“The hardcore of government policies remains further pursuit of the Reagan-Thatcher legacy, on occasion with measures their predecessors did not dare enact: welfare reform in the US; student fees in the UK....The effect of this combination, currently being diffused throughout Europe, is to suppress the conflictual potential of the pioneering regimes of the radical right, and kill off opposition to neo-liberal hegemony more completely. One might say that, by definition, TINA (Mrs Thatcher`s slogan “there is no alternative”) only acquires full force once an alternative regime demonstrates that there are truly no alternative policies....In this sense....we could say that the Third Way is the best ideological shell of neo-liberalism today” (Callinicos 2001: 7, 8).**

As far as our material is concerned, there has perhaps been a limited effect of such theories on the Norwegian Labour Party. This effect is most notable in the speech delivered by Thorbjørn Jagland in 1989; Jagland talks of “the new industrial revolution..which gives capitalism a whole new vitality,” and that this is: “a product of the new technology.”

He goes on to say that: “Those who wish to conduct welfare politics must have the ability to produce reforms when social relations change.” That: “We are faced with new technological realities which make it necessary to find new organisational and ownership models for our state owned companies..... state owned companies had to become more autonomous. Because they had to be capable of competing in an open, international market.....”

This is reminiscent of Anthony Giddens and the theories of the Third Way: **“the left is defined by its concern with the dangers of market, whose excesses need constantly to be reined back by the state. Today, however, this idea has become archaic. The left has to get comfortable with markets” (Giddens 2000: 34).**

Such arguments are used to justify the perceived fact that globalisation is beyond the control of individual governments, and that attempts at such control are useless: **“regulation, controls, trade unions, taxation, public ownership, etc. - are unjustified and should be removed” (Hutton, Giddens 2001: 10).** Anthony Giddens would not go so far as to argue that trade unions should actually be removed, but would probably be in favour of limiting their powers considerably, as, indeed, Tony Blair and New Labour in Great Britain have attempted to do through, for example, breaking down traditional ties between major trade unions and the “new” Labour Party (“faglig-politisk samarbeid”).

In terms of the Norwegian Labour Party, these, or similar, views do, however, seem confined to certain sections of the leadership, and at certain times. The grassroots activists I have interviewed are, at least, of the opinion that certain basic welfare institutions must remain in public hands, and be protected whatever the cost:

**“grunnpillarene i et velferds-system, sånn som helse og politi, må beskyttes og må koste penger.....dette er en vanlig holdning blant AP medlemmer.”**

Several members told me that there is no real debate, or discussion, within the party concerning economic analysis, or the “need” for restructuring in the face of “globalisation.” It seems that the leadership have their opinions, which are in no way unison, and often change somewhat, and the rank and file members have their opinions which often fly in the face of the present day leadership.

At the same time, neoliberal theories have in no way achieved the same general level of hegemony here as in other countries. This may, in part, be due to the fact that, as Christensen and Lægreid point out, the Norwegian economy has had stable growth and there is no real sense of impending stagnation.

Neoliberals would, however, argue (and do so more and more frequently: see, for example, Erna Solbergs comments above) that Norway is indirectly effected by stagnation in the world economy, or at least by, what the German social democrat, and ex-finance minister, Oskar Lafontaine has argued is the main driving force behind “globalisation:” **“political decisions to deregulate markets. As a result, the world economy has become a casino economy” (Giddens 2000: 15).** With the deregulation of markets worldwide, Norway is forced, the neoliberals argue, to adopt the same neoliberal policies as other countries in order to remain competitive. Norway simply must jump on the bandwagon sooner or later.

This last point is extremely similar to what Jagland has to say about Telenor and competition: “Therefore state owned companies had to become more autonomous. Because they had to be capable of competing in an open international market. I would claim that had we not changed the ownership structure from a company administered by the government to a shareholding company then we would not have Telenor today. Now Telenor is our most important technological company.”

This is very reminiscent of neoliberal theorists who talk of the need for deregulation of the world economy in order to bolster competition and growth. However, in Norway in recent years, especially with the Labour Party having been the main party of opposition (having no role in government), such arguments have remained mainly the property of the political right.

## **6.2 A Weberian model of rationalisation**

Sections of the leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party have been largely sympathetic towards privatisation and/or competitive tendering (“konkurransetsetting”) or, at least, have shown a certain degree of indifference (though they have, perhaps, been changing their minds recently).

The party official, or bureaucrat, I interviewed made several statements along the following lines:

**“Arbeidere i Norge klager for mye. Kona mi har en vennine fra Gambia...og hun klager aldri, vi har det bra i Norge.”      “.....ofte et spørsmål om at ny ledelse må til..for å få til en omorganisering som betyr mer effektiv drift: mer kostnadseffektiv og bedre for brukerne..**

**.....Du finner både kommunale og private sykehjem og barnehage som er både dårlig og bra. Det er de ansatte selv som bidrar til å skape usikkerhet, de klager for mye, jeg skjønner at de gjør det, men hvor reellt det er....vi hadde en sak i nærmiljøet mitt: en barnehage som skulle effektiviseres for å spare penger. FAU, påvirket av de ansatte, gikk i mot og stoppet det. Det viser at fagforeningene har makt, det er bra, men! Politikere må ofte ta upopulære beslutninger.”**

**“Jeg har litt redsel for Kommuneforbundets innflytelse. Jeg er opptatt av at brukerne skal få best mulig tilbud..vil ikke ta for mye hensyn til Kommuneforbundet. Per i dag er det sånn at det finnes en samarbeidsavtale mellom Kommuneforbundet og Arbeiderpartiet. Kommuneforbundet kan møte på gruppemøte i Arbeiderpartiets styringsgruppe....Jeg synes vi bør samarbeide med både Høyre og Fremskrittspartiet.”**

**MS: “Konkurransetsetting, eller privatisering, betyr b.l.a. at man prøve å gjøre ting mer “kostnadseffektiv,” men dette betyr ofte at man prøve å kutte i lønn til de ansatte, eller i ansettelsesforhold...”**

**PO: “Det er ikke noe annet sted å spare penger!”**

This certainly shows a certain amount of distancing of the self from, and perhaps a certain amount of disdain for, the attitudes of many public sector shop-floor employees (for example, the other people I, myself, interviewed), their working conditions, and their terms of employment (such as their wages).

It would also seem to be the case that this official is affected by the logic of rationalization discussed earlier inasmuch as **“... insistence that the rationality of adjusting means to ends in the most economical and efficient way is the central task of the bureaucrat “(Macintyre 1981: 86).** He insists on the perceived necessity of achieving a more cost-efficient running of welfare institutions with “a better quality of services,” and even implies that cutting back on wages and working conditions is the

only way of doing this. Here again is a possible contradiction; in his eagerness to achieve more economic efficiency, and “a better quality of service for consumers,” he may be proposing cutbacks which in the long run have a negative effect on both. This in terms of demoralized and exhausted workers who no longer feel capable of achieving, or motivated enough to achieve, previous levels of productivity: **“The great irony and anxiety for Weber was that the process of rationalization.....might well produce more efficient means through which to realize specific effects or goals but only at the cost of neglecting the fundamental values which constitute the end of human action or conduct of human action or conduct. Thus the process of increasing rationalization was.....paradoxically associated with an increase.....the alienation of the human condition” (Smart 1991: 138).**

This particular party official is also obviously in favour of severing at least some of the traditional bonds which exist between the Labour Party and their traditional “working class,” or trade union base of support, at least within the public sector. This, also, in favour of providing more cost-efficient public services for the consumer possibly even when this entails cutbacks in wages and working conditions for the employees.

The Norwegian Labour Party national leadership have, in fact, pushed ahead, on at least two occasions, with partial, further privatisations of at least partially state-owned companies against the express wishes of, and in the face of large protests from large sections of their own party membership, and presumably many of their voters. Namely in the cases of the oil company: “Statoil,” and the telecommunications giant: “Telenor.” Many of the voices of protest in these two cases were raised precisely over concerns around probable (and actual) losses of jobs and trade union rights. Where neoliberal, or similar ideas, have penetrated the Labour Party, it has been amongst certain sections of the leadership, at certain times: they do seem to have vacillated somewhat. The rank and file members I have interviewed, on the other hand, do not seem to be much affected by such ideas, and they tell me that they have not been involved in any debate concerning the state of the world economy or the competitive ability of the country. Why do we find these contradictory tendencies?

Macintyre writes: **“As Marxists organize and move toward power they always do and have become Weberians in substance, even if they remain Marxists in rhetoric; for in our culture we know of no organized movement towards power which is not bureaucratic and managerial in mode and we know of no justifications for authority which are not Weberian in form” (Macintyre 1981: 109).**

And what does he mean by “Weberian in form and substance”? He also writes the following: **“...in his insistence that the rationality of adjusting means to ends in**

**the most economical and efficient way is the central task of the bureaucrat  
...Weber provided the key to much of the modern age” (Macintyre 1981: 86).**

Rationalization was the main concept involved in Max Weber's analysis of the growth of modern day capitalism. This involved a set of related processes leading to almost every aspect of human action becoming subject to evermore calculation, measurement and control. On the economic level we had the factory system with the division, and mechanization of labour (with, later on, “Taylorism,” the conveyor-belt, and “assembly-line” production), double-entry bookkeeping, and the pursuit, and accumulation, of profit. In terms of morality and religion, we had protestantism replacing the older forms for collective religious solidarity with an ethics based on individualism, discipline, training and, above all, hard work. On the level of politics there was ever increasing bureaucratization. Even in terms of European music, since about the time of Bach: the music scale was, according to Weber, rationalized and turned into a disciplined form of abstract mathematics.

The “magic” was taken out of life. Capitalism became an “Iron Cage” in which the individual was stripped of all values concerning traditional morality, solidarity and belief systems. These values were replaced by the ideology of universal rationality, expressed in its most concrete and pervasive form through the enormous growth of modern day bureaucracy, concerning itself with the most “rational” and efficient way of running society: “Of adjusting means to ends in the most economical and efficient way.” The people were not consulted: bureaucratic experts had a monopoly on rationality.

The leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party “organize and move towards power,” whilst rank and file activists remain in their local communities. Here lies, perhaps, the most important clue as to why we find such differences in attitude between sections of the leadership and their own members. For as the leadership move towards power they become, more and more, bureaucrats: and their “central task” becomes, more and more, the rational, pragmatic, adjustment of means to ends “in the most economical and efficient way.” They attempt to combine the “rational,” efficient, economical running of the capitalist economy, based on international competition for the constant accumulation of the maximum amount of profit, with taking care of the ever increasing and very human needs expressed through the institutions of the welfare state.

There is a basic contradiction here, and such contradiction was pointed out by Max Weber a long time ago; the “rational” leads to the irrational: **“The great irony and anxiety for Weber was that the process of rationalization, especially in its twin, interconnected manifestations of bureaucratization and industrialism, might well produce more efficient means through which to realize specific effects or goals but only at the cost of neglecting the fundamental values which constitute the end**



**of human action or conduct. Thus the process of increasing rationalization was in Weber's view paradoxically associated with an increase in the intensity of irrationality and with a further extension of the alienation of the human condition" (Smart 1991: 138).**

It is, perhaps the process of rationalization, or bureaucratization, which leads to a certain amount of vacillation, ambivalence, or indifference, towards the free play of market forces within the public sector, amongst sections of the leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party. The logic of rationalization, contributes, perhaps, towards producing my "ideal type no. 1."

### **6.3 Ruling class ideology**

The leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party, and the main trade unions, have been heavily influenced by ruling class ideology ever since, at least, the 1920s or 1930s. The great "class compromise" from the 1930s onwards led to the combined leadership of the unions and the Labour Party emphasizing, more and more, the "need" for increased economic productivity (and, of course, increased profits for the capitalist class) if reforms on behalf of the working class were "to be paid for."

Finn Olstad skriver: **"Politikken fikk forrang framfor lønnskrav og tariffoppgjør. Det gjaldt å ikke ødelegge Arbeiderpartiets valg sjanser ved harde krav eller streiker som kunne gi den borgelige agitasjonen vann på mølla. Fra 1935 ble hensynet til regjeringen Nygaardsvold avgjørende....Tilspisset kan vi si at Arbeiderpartiet la gamle programmer på hylla.....Sosialistiske dogmer og motviljen mot å administrere det kapitalistiske samfunnet måtte vike til fordel for en begrenset reformpolitikk.....Politiske løsninger skulle sikre arbeiderne de gode og rettigheter de ikke kunne ta ut av næringslivet (som alderstrygd, ledighetstrygd, bedre syketrygd og ny arbeidervernlov)" (Olstad 1991:112, 113).**

Evidence of a similar politics is also given in Sverre Lysgaards classic study of a "workers collective" on the factory floor in Moss in the late 1950s: **"Det er i hvert fall ikke vårt inntrykk at det lokale arbeiderkollektivet for tiden er understøttet av en mer offisiell faglig og politisk kampideologi.....Arbeiderne er fremdeles underordnet i norsk industri. Men de er kommet i en situasjon som minner om de overordnede i den ene forstand at de ikke kan unnså seg den personlige forpliktelsen overfor det tekniske/ økonomiske system med en følelse av full legitimitet. Hvordan skulle de kunne gjøre det innenfor en fagbevegelse som arrangerer produktivitetskurs og sender sine representanter sammen med amerikanske produktivitetsekspertter rundt om på arbeidsplassene?" (Lysgaard 1961: 244).**

Ralph Miliband (1973) also writes in his classic study of "the western system of power" of how social democratic leaders have long ago given up on the struggle for

socialism and resigned themselves to the administration of capitalism. Not least because they are affected by “ruling class ideology:” **“Historically, labour and socialist movements have been the main driving force for the extension of the democratic features of capitalist societies.....But their performance of this role has been very substantially and very negatively affected by the constantly more pronounced ideological and political integration of social democratic leaders into the framework of capitalism” (Milliband 1973: 244).**

The international capitalist class would seem to be engaged in a constant “ideological power struggle” in order to try and achieve the most possible hegemony for their ideas concerning the role of the market worldwide. Simply witness Stein Erik Hagens comments to “Dagbladet” (quoted above) about self-satisfied Norwegian workers who need to learn from their Asian and American brethren how to work longer hours and take less holidays. These comments came after Hagen had participated in the “World Economic Forum” “top business meeting” at Davos in Switzerland. Top bosses, and politicians, also politicians of the left, and, occasionally, labour movement leaders, regularly hold such international meetings and seminars where the aim is to reach some sort of consensus on how to conduct business on a worldwide scale in years to come. These meetings often achieve wide publicity (not least, in recent years, because of protests against them) and can be seen as part of an ideological power struggle concerning the “best” way to run the world economy. These meetings do have some influence over the labour movement: one of the participants at the Davos meeting this time was Gerd Liv Valla, leader of the largest trade union federation in Norway (“Dagbladet”: 23. 01.04).

It would, perhaps, then, seem to be something of an “iron law” that ruling class ideology will exercise some influence over the Labour Party leadership. At the same time they will also be influenced by traditional social democratic, or socialist, values and ideology.

#### **6.4 Working class “ideology”**

There is, perhaps, no such thing today as “working class ideology” in the same sense as I have described “ruling class ideology:” a set of unified theories struggling for some sort of international hegemony on behalf of the class. However, there does seem to be some very strongly held unison sets of beliefs and values amongst the people I have interviewed of “ideal type no. 2” and, to some extent, “ideal type no.3.” These values and beliefs may be based on some sort of common lifestyle, at least if one attempts a Marxist analysis of ideology as concerns this particular phenomena: as Macintyre writes (although he is very critical of the theory) the Marxist theory of ideology attempts: **“a set of law-like generalizations which link the material conditions and**

**class structures of societies as kinds of cause to ideologically informed beliefs as kinds of effect” (Macintyre 1981: 110).**

For it was certainly not the case that the following statement from Inger Maria Hagen (2003): “Politisk styring virker ikke - er en selvsagt og idag ikke særlig kontroversiell uttalelse” could be applied to the “normal” “working class” members of the party I interviewed (the term working class can be applied in the sense that these people were mostly workers “on the shop floor” (“På golvet”) of public sector workplaces). Perhaps the fact that they all occupy similar positions in the social hierarchy, or a similar “class position” in the production of services in the public sector, gives them a common outlook which is extremely critical of privatisation and “competetive tendering,” for common outlook they certainly had.

All of the people I interviewed who were of “ideal type” two or three (especially two), that is, all of the grassroots activists and passive members I interviewed were very much in favour of maintaining the status quo in the public sector. They all felt quite strongly about both maintaining public ownership and the traditional way of doing things in the public sector workplace. Several of them expressed real anger over competetive tendering in their own places of work, or within their local community.

These people were especially concerned about the following two phenomena:

1. The quality of care in the community.

Here they were concerned about providing what they considered to be an adequate level of solidarity with the less privileged, and less “well-off” members of society: the poor, the immigrants, the elderly, single mothers, the disabled, the mentally handicapped. Inability to maintain an adequate level of solidarity due to restructuring of the public sector workplace was seen as an attack on the very fabric of the local community, and “community spirit” (“felleskapsånd”).

2. Workers rights in the public sector workplace.

Here the emphasis was on maintaining established working conditions and trade union rights. These people felt quite strongly that certain traditions concerning these issues should be upheld at any cost: they had established rights which should not be taken away and the union and the Labour Party should fight to maintain them.

These two sets of phenomena combined could perhaps be described as “social democratic values:” based on a strong symbolism and a sense of what people saw as social democratic tradition. Real anger was expressed at perceived attacks upon these traditions and values. The symbolism was expressed through related sets of linguistic terms such as “community” (“felleskap”), “solidarity”, “solidarity with the weakest members of society” (“de svake i samfunnet”), “solidarity with the poor” (“solidaritet med de fattige”) “the grassroots,” “the attitudes of the grassroots have to be heard” (“grasrotas synspunkter må fram”), “the need to fight” (“å kjempe”), “workers rights,” “bang your fist on the table and fight for workers rights,” “solidarity in the local

community” (“vi jobber for solidaritet lokalt”), “ideology of community” (“ideologi om felleskap”), “the protection of welfare” (“velferden må beskyttes”), “social politics” (“sosialpolitikk”) and so on.

This symbolism expressed what the people I interviewed saw as a social democratic tradition of protection of the weak, solidarity with the underdog, protection of workers rights, pulling together as part of a local community, and struggling for a better (at least not worse) society. This symbolism, and the very real feelings behind it, such as genuine sympathy towards your fellow man, or heartfelt anger over privatisation and competitive tendering, which is seen as tearing apart the fabric of your local community, often flew directly in the face of some of the attitudes as expressed by “ideal type no.1:” the party official or bureaucrat.

One would, perhaps, expect struggles between different tendencies within the party: different groups representing the differing sets of attitudes. It does seem to be the case, however, that there is very little ideological struggle for hegemony within the party today. No major power struggles between, for example, left and right wing tendencies. At least, the material I have found does not reveal any such tendencies.

Nonetheless grassroots members of the Labour Party whom I have interviewed are still very much in favour of a strong public sector and a large welfare state under direct political control. Their views and feelings on this subject seem to be far more unison and determined than those of the leadership. This point I will return to in my conclusion.

## **7. Conclusion**

In terms of relating to my original research problem my study has revealed certain tendencies within sections of the Norwegian Labour party. These tendencies show that attitudes towards the general free play of market forces within the welfare state, and towards privatisation and competitive tendering in particular, have been changing, and are, to a large extent, in a state of flux, compared with, say, thirty years ago. Also that there are differences of opinion between the rank and file and the leadership, the rank and file members I have interviewed showing strong tendencies towards certain attitudes such as anger or disillusionment, the leadership often showing ambivalence or indifference.

### **7.1 Disillusionment or protest**

Two types of response seem likely from “ideal types” two and three in terms of dealing with perceived attacks on the welfare state, and a Labour Party, and trade unions, which remain reasonably passive in the face of such attacks. The first is utter disillusionment and bitterness. The second is to establish new forms of protest which bypass established bureaucratic organisation and inertia, mobilizing local residents around “**home-grown**

**counter-ideologies” (Burawoy 2000: 31, 32)** of care in the community and the need to defend this at all costs.

Most of the people I interviewed were of the opinion that the Labour Party (and the trade unions) did not do enough. They were no longer a traditional Labour Party, in the sense of “banging your fist on the table” (“Torill”) and fighting for workers rights. They needed to be more militant. They needed to make more noise. They needed a leader who was tougher, and who talked of fighting. Comments like: “The workers party need to rediscover the working class: and to talk, again, of fighting against the politics of the right,” (“Torill”) were not unusual.

However, this is perhaps the more positive approach. A typical comment from “ideal type no.3” was the following: “The Labour Party only cares about the efficient running of the economy. They do not really care about workers rights and the quality of services” (“passive member”). In the face of bureaucratic inertia and indifference, “ideal type no 3” no longer really sees the Labour Party as a workers party, capable of defending workers rights, and the quality of care in the community. She is more or less totally disillusioned with politics in general, and somewhat bitter: “they say they are against privatisation-but they don’t do anything!” (“passive member”). Her membership in the party has become a case of “hoping against hope” that a vote for the Labour Party will make a slight difference.

“Ideal type no.2” however is trying to rejuvenate her local party branch, and, perhaps put some pressure on the central party leadership in order to force them, to some extent, to, once again, start “fighting for workers, and community, rights” (“Torill”). At the same time, she is attempting to mobilize her local community against the policies of the right through unofficial channels.

Attempted rejuvenation of the local party branch, and possible pressure on the party leadership, combined with protesting the policies of the parties of the right and putting pressure also on their elected representatives through public demonstrations (for example, outside the town hall) occur through unofficial channels of “direct action” and community “revolt,” bypassing the usual bureaucratic channels of dialogue and compromise. Local networks of community activists are established, they are loosely organised, with a “flat structure,” and based on a common outlook, common experiences, and a common interest in maintaining the quality of public services in their own neighbourhood. A local dialogue of protest is established, where the emphasis is on using methods of direct action in order to make the politicians “sit up and take notice,” and to influence public opinion through the mediation of a humanitarian ethics stating the need to defend local services against perceived cutbacks and for the benefit of local residents: here a strong element of solidarity with your nearest neighbours is involved.

This is highly reminiscent of earlier sociological research on “social movements” (Giddens 1989: 642) describing collective social “action” (Blumer 1998)

involving attempts to achieve political goals through bypassing (or possibly in addition to the work of, and in cooperation with) established political organisations. For example, the “theory of resource mobilization” emphasizes the fact that social movements are often cases of coordinated, collective action mobilized around very concrete goals such as attempting to influence particular policy making by politicians. The case of “Torill” and her fellow local residents organising demonstrations and protests directed at the town hall, at a time when the politicians were still in the planning stages of attempting to partially privatize her workplace, is surely an example of the latter.

## 7.2 Symbolic interactionism

In terms of grassroots responses to competitive tendering I certainly feel that I have uncovered social processes of group interaction which produce a definite and pronounced response amongst my “ideal type no.2,” and to some extent, my “ideal type no.3. These responses are something akin to what I have, rather loosely, termed “working class ideology,” and, perhaps, rather akin to Bourdieu’s “habitus” in as much as it is an analysis of everyday symbolism and “commonsense” practices which help shape peoples lives: **“A permanent dialectic between an organising consciousness and automatic behaviours” (Bourdieu 1990: 80).**

However, I feel that Blumers’ theories of symbolic interactionism are perhaps best suited to analysing these responses. I feel that these responses are most pronounced in the material I have received from my interviews with “Torunn” and “Torill.” They are also, most probably, well represented in the case of the Kane care workers of which Lopez (2000) gives a very good account.

According to the tenets of symbolic interactionism the interpretation of meaning which an individual, as a member of a particular group, will give to any particular “object” ( the term “object” including rather abstract concepts such as, for example; social institution, idea, philosophical doctrine, code of moral ethics) will be constantly redefined as part of a dynamic, ongoing process of group interaction: **“Such interaction in human society is characteristically and predominantly on the symbolic level; as individuals...encounter one another they are necessarily required to take account of the actions of one another as they form their own action. They do this by a dual process of indicating to others how to act and of interpreting the indications made by others. Human group life is a vast process of such defining to others what do to and of interpreting their definitions...joint activity and individual conduct are formed *in* and *through* this ongoing process” (Blumer 1998: 10).**

Through such ongoing processes of dynamic social interaction the meanings the group gives to objects will be defined, and constantly redefined.

Burawoy and Lopez (2000) also write of how ideological forces on the macro scale, such as the present day global “neoliberal discourse,” can affect local (micro) group processes, provoking localized responses to the global. Here both Burawoy and Lopez emphasize quite strongly the importance of ideology, both global and local:

**“Other scholars have drawn attention to the problem of ideology, arguing that unions must create an appealing vision of society capable of mobilizing workers and their community allies: a “labour ideology” which “unabashedly champions class-unifying themes” such as universal rights to decent jobs, housing, publicly funded health care....Such attempts are necessary to counter the ascendant neoliberal ideology of the contemporary period, which presents market forces as universal, natural, inevitable, and irresistible” (Lopez 2000: 273).**

And: **“ideology may be mobilized to resist globalization. Metropolitan elites may wield neoliberal ideology, turning away from class compromise and public services to demand class concessions and privatization, but they also confront a rising tide of opposition mobilized around local ideologies of justice and care” (Burawoy 2000: 342).**

Lopez` description of the successful struggle of the Pittsburgh care workers against the privatisation of a public nursing home is extremely similar to the story “Torill” has to tell of the successful struggle against privatisation centred around her workplace in Oslo. Both examples can be seen as partly ideological struggles, with a globalized neoliberal orthodoxy, stating the “need” for cutbacks in the public sector, coming into conflict with localized ideologies of “community” and “solidarity.”

The somewhat global nature of these processes and responses is emphasized when one looks at the internal make up of the “welfare regimes” (Esping- Andersen 1999) involved. According to Esping- Andersen “Scandinavian social democratic welfare regimes” make serious attempts towards achieving comprehensive, across the board, social equality, whilst the “liberal, Anglo-Saxon welfare regimes” (Great Britain and the USA) have a much more individualistic approach, “targetting” certain groups who receive benefits: **“The Scandinavian social democrats have now for decades defined their target as the equalization of social resources, a multidimensional across-the-board programmatic effort to level social capital; in contrast, the liberal Anglo-Saxon approach is selective, singling out disadvantaged groups for “sponsored mobility” (Esping- Andersen 1999: 32).** `

There are, then, major differences between the two types of welfare regime. However, the very fact both these cases (“Torill” and the Kane workers) show such striking similarity despite the fact that they represent social processes in two quite different types of welfare regime is testimony in itself to the global nature of the neoliberal project, and certain types of response to the policy making this project entails.

In both cases a local grassroots “ideology” of humanitarian resistance to the unleashing of market forces within welfare services was combined with unconventional methods of collective struggle (mainly demonstrations) which bypassed the established methods of the trade union bureaucracies and, in the case of Norway, the “workers party.” It was felt that new methods of struggle had to be found in the face of the “neoliberal” or “right wing” “offensive.” The “traditional” tactics of the main workers organisations, dominated by bureaucratic processes of compromise and often near inertia, were seen to be ineffective. As long as they stuck to such tactics these organisations were considered too sluggish and conservative as to be able to effect any real change. In place of such tactics local networks were created which engaged in “confrontational tactics of grassroots public protest:” **“the Service Employees International Union’s Local 9876....had built a remarkable record of successfully organizing low-wage nursing home workers, often using confrontational tactics of grassroots public protest.....Kane workers viewed privatization as something they had a moral duty to struggle against, in order to safeguard the dignity and safety of their residents. Against the ideology of market efficiency which privatization would supposedly introduce, Kane workers counterposed a humanitarian vision of their residents needs, which called them to action” (Lopez 2000: 268, 272).**

As with the cases of “Torill” and “Torunn”, Kane workers perceived the threat of privatization as involving cutbacks which would increase their workload and reduce the quality of services provided to the elderly. Against this threat was counterposed a humanitarian ethics based on maintaining human dignity through providing adequate care in the community. An ethics which allowed no room for what were described as the “inhumane” process of privatisation. Once unconventional tactics had been used in order, amongst other things, to gain media publicity, these humanitarian ethics struck a chord amongst the general public. The resulting “public outcry” made it very difficult for the city and council administrations to carry through their plans for privatisation, and in both cases where such tactics were used the plans were scrapped.

I presume the role of macro processes on a wider social scale will also have some effect on the use of social symbolism within smaller groups. At times of social stability, and a general level of economic growth and prosperity, terms such as “solidarity” and “community” (“felleskap”) may be given a somewhat different meaning for the group (in this case the local Labour Party branch) than at times of instability, change and “cutbacks” (“nedskjæring”): in as much as competitive tendering or privatisation involves cutbacks, or is a partial consequence of cutbacks, such as, for example, cutting down on the council budget, or the amount of this budget to be spent on welfare.

For the people involved in my study, for example, whilst the public economy was sufficient, and welfare institutions reasonably stable, such terms as “solidarity” and



“community” could have simply signified engaging in a form of public philanthropy based on a set of ethics which placed a high value on human group relationships and care in the community: working, primarily, for the benefit of your fellow man as a public employee in the welfare state. Recently however such terms have, perhaps, changed their meaning somewhat, coming to signify (once again) pulling together in the local community in order to fight for the protection, or advancement, of perceived common rights and against attempted cutbacks in, or perceived changes to, the quality of welfare. This last can be seen, to some extent, as a fight against what is perceived as a strengthening of further elements of the commodification of public service provision (Esping- Andersen 1999: 43, 44).

It is precisely such processes, or at least a tendency toward such processes, I have uncovered, in terms of grassroots responses to attempts at privatisation and competitive tendering, amongst localized groups: local Labour Party branches and the people in the local community with whom they interact on a daily basis. I feel these tendencies and processes come especially to light through my interviews with “Torunn” and “Torill.”

Also, as Blumer points out, and as the analysis of my “ideal type no.1” tends to show, different groups experience the meaning of objects in different ways: **“people may be living side by side yet be living in different worlds”** (Blumer 1998: 11). Bureaucrats involved in the running of central government will define objects differently than grassroots community activists operating solely at the local level. For the bureaucrats terms such as “solidarity” and “community” are likely to signify some sort of responsibility for the smooth running of the national economy whilst taking care of all the different interests involved. This often implies a certain budgetary austerity in order to try and meet often conflicting and/ or (possibly) overwhelming demands being made on the national economy. Activists operating only at the local level do not necessarily have to take into account “the national interest” and at the same time their “worlds” are smaller and more concrete: it is they and their fellows who have to “bear the brunt” of the effects of competitive tendering, privatisation and cutbacks. Workers “on the shopfloor” of public enterprises, and the people who receive their services, are the ones who immediately notice, and have to cope with, changes in the structure, cost and quality of public services. They are the ones who somehow have to get by, on a day to day basis, living with the concrete reality of the changing situation.

### **7.3 Social democratic discourse**

It has long been commonsense practice for rank and file members of the Labour Party to concern themselves with issues of solidarity within, and the protection of weaker members of, the local community.

This commonsense practice is largely based on emotive responses to a certain everyday symbolism: an “organising consciousness” of social democratic values evoking certain “automatic behaviours” of social democratic practice. Although, of course, certain automatic behaviours predetermine a social democratic organising consciousness: automatic behaviours which often, perhaps, come quite naturally to people living in working class neighbourhoods, such as the “Grorud valley.” There is, perhaps, truly a “permanent dialectic” at work here. Hobsbawm, for example, writes of the social solidarity which was an integral part of “the internal relations of working-class groups” (Hobsbawm 1968: 88). Even Dag Album in his study of “pasient culture” (“pasientkultur”) in a modern day Norwegian hospital writes of how the working class patients had a “folkelig” culture which partly entailed some sort of collective solidarity in the face of a shared predicament: a culture which patients from higher status groups found alienating. These patients had, it seems, a more individualistic approach to life: **“Sosial ulikhet viste seg likevel. Stilen til de pasientene som var mye sammen og var sammen i større grupper, på røykerommet eller i korridoren, hadde et preg av såkalt folkelig kultur. som jeg har skrevet før, var det noen pasienter som reagerte mot denne væremåten. De fleste av dem tilhørte høyere sosiale lag....Deres løsning på problemene med å være innlagt og syk var individualistisk” (Album 1996: 246).**

However, I would conclude that an integral part of the organising consciousness of the social democratic workers party of Norway (felt most strongly today, it would seem, at the local, grassroots level) is an everyday symbolism with historical roots in the social democratic “ideological” tradition. There is a strong interplay at work here between social forces on the micro level, social forces on the macro level and vice versa. Localized group processes can have a dynamic cumulative effect culminating in the long run in the establishment of a new social order on a macro scale. Barry Barnes writes of how processes of social interaction located in particular situations can create **“extended patterns and connections”** which can achieve an overall influence on the macro level: **“the existence of these patterns allows situated social interaction to engender extended collective action and a situation- transcending normative order” (Barnes 1995: 88).**

This is wholly in line with Olstad (1991) and his description of how the powerful labour movement, which was to largely shape the overall development of Norwegian society during the course of the twentieth-century through “extended collective action,” had its origins in extremely localized struggles of very small groups of workers organizing the first small-scale trade unions against the negative effects of the onset of large scale industrialisation.

This is also in line with Korpi (1983) and his **“balance of class power argument” (Esping- Andersen 1999: 16).** Esping- Andersen writes the following: **“Where trade unionism was less centralized and coverage limited, as in the United**

**States, the result was more segmentation, dualism and, hence, inequality.....In contrast, market distribution is likely to be more egalitarian where trade unionism is centralized and coverage comprehensive as in much of Europe, but especially in Scaninavia” (Esping- Andersen 1999: 16).** The Norwegian working class grew from humble origins and became organized, with a high degree of collective action and centralized leadership enabling the forcing through of a series of reforms involving a certain degree of the redistribution of wealth.

Giddens (1982) lays special emphasis on the concepts of power and legitimacy. Once the Norwegian labour movement had achieved political, and to a large extent economic *power*, after the second world war, a social democratic discourse was established on a national scale, and hence, with a very strong legitimacy, or indeed, hegemony. A discourse which can still be called into play today, in defence of workers rights and the quality of care in the community, as part of localized group struggles against “neoliberal ideology” and “right wing politics” with their ensuing policies of competitive tendering and privatisation. This everyday symbolism, which I have already referred to on several occasions also in previous chapters, could perhaps be termed “social democratic discourse,” in as much as it consists of sets of systematically related terms, representing certain commonly perceived concepts which have become identified with social democracy, and employed, first and foremost, by certain social groups, not least of all people within the Labour Party. This particular discourse was perhaps stronger in previous years, at least, for example, amongst the leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party, but I do not think it is, in any way, in danger of completely dying out anywhere in the near future.

The grassroots activists I have interviewed, and the “everyday people” with whom they engage in localized processes of social interaction, are largely angry at attempts at competitive tendering or privatization and the “rational” emphasis on “cost efficiency” which this entails. Local group processes of resistance to perceived “cutbacks,” both in terms of working conditions for public sector employees, and the quality of services provided to, for example, residents of old peoples homes, entail the collective recreation, or rediscovery, of a strong symbolism of local solidarity and care in the community.

This symbolism of localized solidarity, based largely on feelings of mutual responsibility within the immediate community, is rather similar to the symbolism of traditional peasant societies, based on the extended family as the most important social unit, or communities based on ancient kinship ties: **“Every individual has a given role and status....The key structures are those of kinship and of the household. In such a society a man knows who he is by knowing his role in these structures; and by knowing this he knows also what he owes and what is owed to him by the occupant of every other role and status” (Macintyre 1981: 122).**

Such social processes of mutual obligation can also be compared to Durkheims' account of "mechanical solidarity" in "primitive societies," not least because they are based on reciprocal ties between groups of equals: **"Mekanisk solidaritet.....en særegen solidaritet, nemlig den som kommer av at de samme følelser og forestillinger oppleves av alle: Den solidaritet som følger av likhet mellom samfunnsmedlemmene. Denne kollektive bevissthet om likhet knytter individet direkte til samfunnet, og får det til å tenke og handler solidarisk, kollektivt"** (Østerberg 1983: 40). There has been a strong social democratic discourse in Norway through the afterwar years based on "the principle of equality" ("likhetsprinsippet"), and our neighbours in Sweden have perhaps taken such discourse even further with their talk of "the Peoples Home" ("folkhemmet") (Mjøset 1985: 233, Esping- Andersen 1999: 34).

A social democratic "humanitarian discourse" is rediscovered, or partially recreated, based on a strong set of humanitarian ethics calling for care in the community and solidarity with your fellow man. This discourse is counterposed to "neoliberal ideology" which attempts to argue for the perceived need to allow the free play of market forces to determine the price and quality of welfare services.

The most successful of these group processes which I discovered, where an attempt at partial privatisation was actually stopped by local activists, occurred along lines of resistance which bypassed the established Labour Party bureaucracy or public sector trade unions. Established channels of protest and complaint through the main "workers organisations" were seen as ineffective, as these organisations were considered too bureaucratic and conservative to effect any real change. A network of local activists was created based on the workers involved, users of the facility, local residents, friends and families. Unofficial tactics were used, chiefly a large demonstration on the steps of the town hall, and a local "ideology of struggle" was developed based on "rank and file repertoires" (Lopez 2000: 288). This can perhaps be seen as a throwback to earlier, more "traditional" forms of protest and direct action, such as the illegal strikes and demonstrations which helped shape the Labour Party and the trade unions one hundred years ago.

As my interviews show, social democratic discourse is still very much alive today: the rank and file "backbone" of the Labour Party still employ such discourse in a very strong fashion. A brief extract from "Torills" interview will illustrate my point:

**"AP har holdt tradisjoner om felleskap levende.....  
...tradisjoner som har gått i arv fra far og mor (i hvertfall at barna også stemmer rødt)...det jeg har opplevd av diskusjoner har vært mest av praktisk art: hva som skal gjøres lokalt...en del ideologi blant Ap folk lokalt som går på felleskap ...om å beskytte velferden...velferden skal være tilgjengelig for alle...ideologi om sosialpolitikk... skiller seg fra Høyre i at Høyre mener alle må passe seg selv."**

There is clear evidence here of the discursive mediation of social democratic concepts of community, solidarity and welfare. Concepts which, furthermore, would seem to have solid historical foundations in “the social-democratic epoch” after the second world war.

### **Historical foundations**

In chapter one of this paper, in the section entitled “Research design,” I write the following: “In analysing the data I will lay special emphasis on how peoples attitudes are socially constructed with reference to, more or less given, conceptual frameworks which help to shape their perceived awareness of the world around them: I wish to **“theorize the world in terms of the impact of (objective) social structures upon(subjective) dispositions” (Silverman. 2001: 100).** This because I believe that certain conceptual frameworks (such as sets of interconnected visual and linguistic symbols, or ideological systems of belief) can become **“social facts”** (“objective social structures”) strongly influencing individuals attitudes and behaviour.

It is my contention that the “The Golden Age” of Norwegian Social Democracy, in the years after the second world war (Mjøset 1991), lay the foundations for the development of a social democratic discourse amongst wide sections of the Norwegian people, and that this discourse is still rather strong today. The consciousness of, perhaps a majority of Labour Party members, is still very much a product of, or influenced by, such discourse. A discursive practice based on related sets of terms such as: “community,” “solidarity,” “social politics,” “welfare,” “care in the community,” “public ownership,” “political control,” and so on.

### **The future**

Generally speaking one could, perhaps, say that peoples attitudes towards the free play of market forces within local government care services are changing/ have changed since the 1970s. Back then, after over two and a half decades with steady economic growth, and an ever greater share of the BNP going towards financing an ever growing public sector (**Lysestøl & Eilertsen 2001: 30, 31**) people would have been more likely to think in terms of stable progress towards an ever more benevolent welfare state alongside a steadily increasing rise in living standards.

Nowadays, with the second attempt to establish “a wild utopia” well under way, in terms of the dissemination of neoliberal ideology and the implimentation of policies which endorse the free play of market forces within care services, peoples attitudes are in a state of flux. There is a general consensus that change is necessary, or “inevitable;” that the public sector needs to become more “efficient,” not least in terms of becoming more “cost effective.” At the same time there is a strong sense of a perceived need to defend the status quo amongst many of the people I interviewed. A social democratic

discourse, perhaps still loosely based on some sort of marxist ideology, and promoting ethical values based on solidarity with your fellow man, and the perceived need to protect each other from the worst ravages of a competitive capitalist economy, is still very strong amongst the grassroots members I have spoken to. On the one hand these people accept that change must come, but on the other hand they wish to resist change in order to protect their rights.

Bureaucrats within the party have been very indecisive, and have vacillated in terms of whether or not to allow market forces more room to operate within care services. It has therefore been difficult to decipher/ understand just what their attitudes towards privatisation and competitive tendering are. Witness the statement from one of the leaders of the main public sector trade union federation: **“Fagforbundets nestleder Tove Stangnes .....Hun mener Arbeiderpartiet har vært veldig opptatt av å effektivisere.**

**- Det var i en periode ikke så lett å tyde hva de mente om konkurranseutsetting, sier hun” (“Dagsavisen,” 29. mars 2004 (page 6).** It is quite possible, as the one bureaucrat I have interviewed in fact implies, that leaders of the Labour Party have been very sympathetic towards the implementation of neoliberal policies of privatisation and competitive tendering, but that their later experiences with the same have convinced them that “things do not, at least, get any better with the implementation of competitive tendering. A general consensus is perhaps also developing around the perceived facts that privatisation and competitive tendering do not make services any cheaper, and in fact in many cases make them more expensive. Also that these policies do not improve the quality of services, but simply lead to more bureaucracy and inefficiency. Many Labour Party leaders now perhaps feel that they have tried out these policies and that they have been shown to be lacking: they did not deliver on their promises according to neoliberal ideology.

My study suggests that “the people” often feel a strong sense of community, and a tradition of solidarity, and that they also feel very strongly that both are threatened by privatisation and “competitive tendering.” There is still a very powerful social democratic discourse within the Norwegian Labour Party; very strong amongst the grassroots members but still very much present also among the leadership. This makes things extremely difficult for the party bureaucrats should they try to undermine social democratic values, based on reciprocity towards your fellow man, “and conditional obligation to others,” without losing support, both amongst their own members, but also amongst the electorate in general.

The leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party certainly seem to be rethinking their views on the subject:

**“APs sosialpolitisk talsmann Bjarne Håkon Hansson: “Vi politikere må tenke gjennom effektene av våre kutt i offentlig sektor. Det som kan være**

**bedriftsøkonomisk lønnsomt på ett budsjett eller i en virksomhet, er ikke alltid samfunnsøkonomisk lønnsomt, sier Hansson.” (“Dagsavisen.” 29. mars. 2004: 6).**

The world renowned economist John Kenneth Galbraith also makes a point about the short-sightedness of men of business in his well known study of “The Great Crash of 1929:” **“But now, as throughout history, financial capacity and political perspicacity are inversely correlated. Long run salvation by men of business has never been highly regarded if it means the disturbance of orderly life and convenience in the present” (Galbraith 1992: 210).**

Stronger arguments for political control of the economy are perhaps hard to come by.

#### **7.4 My research findings related to other relevant research findings**

It does seem to be the case that much of the material I have uncovered corroborates somewhat the conclusions reached by Christensen and Lægreid, and, to some extent, Bowles and Gintis. There follows a brief review of several themes uncovered in their work which coincide with tendencies in my own material.

#### **Differences of opinion between the “grassroots” or “citizens” and people occupying leading positions in society.**

Christensen & Lægreids research suggests that public “shopfloor” employees, “grassroots” Labour Party members, and, amongst these, especially women, are often strong opponents of privatisation and downsizing of the public sector, and strong supporters of a large and supportive welfare state. The strongest supporters of privatisation and the free play of market forces are most likely to be among the elites. This finding is strengthened by measurement of the variable: “level of education” as many of those occupying leading positions in society will also be those with the highest level of education. Measurement of this variable shows that those with most education are also more likely to support privatisation and downsizing.

#### **Symbolism, rhetoric, and pragmatism.**

Christensen and Lægreid also write of pragmatism combined with rhetoric and symbolism. Once again the material I have uncovered shows ample proof of this. Both Jaglands speeches, Labour Party documents and interviews with local activists are full of political rhetoric and social democratic symbolism combined with a pragmatic approach to practical politics.

The examples are many: Jagland pays tribute to the traditional social democratic ideal of the need for a large public sector which is to provide care in the community, and in his political rhetoric even paraphrases Karl Marx. All this in order to justify what he presents as the pragmatic need to partly privatize the entire public sector in order to remain economically competitive.

Gerhardsens handbook for the movement, “Tillitsmennene,” is full of socialist symbolism: he writes, for example, of “workers of hand and brain, who have a basic socialist view of the world, working together with the Labour Party towards a socialist society.” The handbook “Together” (“Sammen”) is full of political rhetoric. Here the talk is of ideological differences between social-democracy and the parties of the right: “Two different views of society.” The Labour Party is said to be against increased power to the market (“markedsmakt”) and a tougher working life (“tøffere arbeidsliv”). Stoltenberg, quoted in the housing association newspaper, is of the opinion that “housing is far too important to entrust to the market.”

Not least of all, in terms of our analysis, the Labour Party claim to be opponents of privatisation and “konkurransetsetting av eldreomsorgen,” and for a society based on a sense of community, where everybody has the same possibilities to achieve a good life, and where the politicians have, at least to some extent, political control over the economy.

At the same time, the Labour Party programme is extremely pragmatic, talking of the need to cope with increasing levels of welfare dependency, it states that “all this has to be paid for,” and goes on to state the perceived need for more effective use of resources in the public sector, along with help from “private actors” (“private aktører”).

These examples are very representative of Labour Party literature and documents in general, where social democratic symbolism and rhetoric, with flowery phrases about the need for a strong public sector, and welfare state, are combined with a pragmatic approach towards practical politics and a welcoming of “private initiative.” This is also somewhat representative of how the membership think. This last point is illustrated by the interview with one of the grassroots activists where the respondent talks of a sense of community, of solidarity, and of fighting for workers rights; of Labour Party traditions and the need for a socialist government, whilst at the same time stating that her own political work is based on a local “pragmatism:” on “working for solidarity in the local community.”

### **Cultural traditions based on norms and values which endorse social solidarity.**

Bowles and Gintis write of how: “voters support the welfare state because it conforms to deeply held norms of reciprocity and conditional obligation to others,” and this particular theory does correlate quite strongly with many of the findings in my



interview material. Simply consider how many times people interviewed talk of the need for community (“felleskap”), solidarity and cooperation (“samarbeid”). People expressed some quite real anger over the fact that, as far as they could see, privatisation and competitive tendering were destroying the fabric of solidarity within local communities, that it was the “weakest” people who were suffering as a consequence. They also expressed feelings that a certain amount of publicly provided welfare was absolutely necessary even if it did cost more money.

**The fact that the Norwegian economy has not experienced crisis to the same extent as the rest of the world and neoliberal theories have, therefore, not achieved as much hegemony here as in other countries.**

Christensen and Lægreid also comment on the Norwegian economy having been relatively stable, citing this as one of the reasons why NPM-reforms have not been so widespread here as in other countries. Again, the material I have uncovered would support the claim that Norwegian politicians, business leaders, and others, have no perceived sense of any ongoing, or impending, economic crisis, or stagnation, in Norway. There is, however, quite a lot of talk of the need for restructuring of the economy in order to cope with increased economic competition on a global level.

**Oppgaven består av 38, 977 ord.**

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